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# THE SOUL OF PIERRE.





**"PROMISE ME NEVER TO SPEAK ON THIS SUBJECT AGAIN, WILL YOU?"**

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# THE SOUL OF PIERRE

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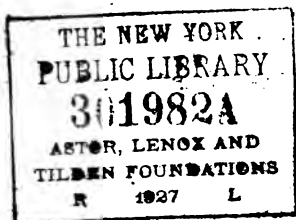
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## THE SOUL OF PIERRE.

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### I.

**D**R. DAVIDOFF, an inspired look lighting up his rugged and strongly marked countenance, turned toward the guests of Prince Patrizzi and let fall in the midst of the discussion the following remarkable words:

"Do you believe, then, in the power of suggestion, urged with the sharpness and persistence of a gimlet's point, to make a thought enter your mind? Do you believe that this thought can influence your moral condition to such a degree as to alter your physical condition. You concede, do you not, that the moral nature exercises a potent,—an irresistible influence over the physical?"

"We do," tranquilly responded the Neapolitan. "And for this reason—and here is the

ground on which I propose to meet you—it would be necessary to conclude—”

This response to the Russian doctor's question, which seemed to promise a lengthy discussion, was succeeded among the men and women who had just finished dining in the salon of the Hotel de Paris, on the terrace at Monte Carlo, by a moment of stupefied silence. Around the table, sumptuously laid, and on which the flowers were dying, asphyxiated in the heat of the lights and the smoke of the cigarettes, glances of astonishment and ennui were interchanged. Then a storm of remonstrances and exclamations—the indignant protest of these worldly people, compelled to abandon for a moment the habitual frivolity of their discourse to listen to the dry details of a scientific discussion, broke forth.

“We have had enough of physiology!”

“We are here to drink, to smoke, to laugh.”

“This is a dining-room, not a clinic.”

“Bah! The doctor is crazy!”

“Listen, gentlemen, I beg of you; it is very curious!”



**"PATRIZZI REMAINED SEATED."**

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"These ladies are getting bored."

"Open the windows, this smells of science."

"For my part I would much rather be at the Casino. I dreamed last night that red turned up thirteen times—"

"That was a suggestion of the croupiers."

"Don't you want to come and dance?"

"Oh, Laura, come to the piano and play for us."

"Well, my children, go where you will, but let us have peace."

"How rude you all are!"

Several of the guests arose noisily and asked their wraps from the *maitre d'hôtel*, who hastened to get them. Patrizzi remained seated, looking with a smile at the beautiful women, who with coquettish gestures shook out their skirts, and gave a few touches to their bodices. He extended his hand nonchalantly to his friends, saying:

"Let every one follow his own inclination. Go on before us. In an hour we will join you."

Then turning toward the painter, Pierre



Laurier, his friend Jacques de Vignes, and Dr. Davidoff, who had not moved—

“Go on, my dear fellow,” he said to the doctor, “you interest me amazingly.”

The Russian doctor threw away the cigarette he was smoking, lighted another, and looking at his three listeners with an authoritative air, he continued the recital that had been abruptly cut short by the interruptions of those who had just withdrawn.

“I confess that the story I had begun to tell our friends is strange enough, and that to skeptical minds it may seem improbable, although in our Slav countries, where the atmosphere is foggy and gloomy, and which seem the native land of spectres and phantoms, it would not have awakened the least incredulity. Half of our compatriots are unconscious Swedenborgians, who believe with the great philosopher, but without examination, in the phenomena of the invisible world; and if you should state in their presence, as I state now, the astonishing fact that the soul of a dying person may enter into a living body,

through the will of the person about to die, you would see them turn pale and tremble indeed, but they would not dispute its truth. In our country we believe in vampires who issue from their tombs as soon as the first ray of moonlight falls upon the stone; we believe in apparitions that announce an approaching death. And by the sole fact of believing in these miracles they are rendered possible. A strong conviction is the most powerful of forces, and spiritualism requires as its first condition unquestioning belief. 'If you doubt,' the adepts will tell you, 'do not seek to penetrate our mysteries; they will remain, for you, unfathomable. The invisible world reveals itself only to those who desire ardently to have a knowledge of it. Scoffers and skeptics will find it forever closed to them.' "

Jacques de Vignes was here taken with a violent fit of coughing, which caused a death-like pallor to overspread his handsome and melancholy countenance. He recovered his breath with difficulty, and turning to the doctor, as if encouraged by a secret hope:

"And you yourself were a witness of the occurrence?" he asked, in a choking voice. "You saw this young girl re-born into existence, recover her strength, her health, as if the vitality of her betrothed had passed into her undiminished?"

"I do not discuss the question whether the material fact occurred," responded Davidoff, "I give you solely and simply its psychological consequences. Wladimir Alexievich, seeing Maria Fedorowna, whom he adored, expiring gradually, as the flame of a lamp expires for want of oil, sought in vain, by turns, the help of every physician in Moscow, and having sent for me to St. Petersburg,—me, who am now speaking to you—only to hear from my lips her sentence of death, conceived the idea of directing himself to an old Tongouze sorceress who had brought with her from Nijni-Novgorod the reputation of being able to work miracles. He went one evening—Christmas eve it was—to the wretched hovel outside the city in which she lived, to consult her. The witch, after performing in his presence her terrific incant-

ations, gave him in a wooden cup a strangely smelling beverage to drink. As he hesitated to drink it she looked at him with a threatening air and said :

"You pretend to love a woman, and to desire to save her life, even at the expense of your own, and yet you are afraid to drink a liquid because the nature of it is unknown to you, and you think it may be poison. Oh, man! son of man, a coward like all men, suffer and shed tears like a man, since you are not able to elevate yourself above humanity!"

As she spoke, Wladimir Alexievich, touched with shame, emptied the rude goblet at a draught, and felt as if seized with a sudden intoxication. A delicious warmth pervaded his frame, and he felt himself become lighter and lighter, until it seemed to him as if he were floating in air. His eyes seemed veiled in a luminous mist, as if his gaze, piercing beyond the clouds, had been arrested by sudden splendors. His blood surged in his veins and seraphic hymns sounded in his ears. He felt himself transported into boundless realms

of light, and his brow was refreshed by delightful breezes. Little by little he lost the consciousness of terrestrial things, and in the midst of a divine transport, an ecstatic beatitude, he saw advancing toward him a celestial shape, a shining and wondrous apparition, which, in a voice sweet as the song of angels, thus addressed him:

"Do you wish to purchase the life of her you love? Then give your own in exchange for it. Your soul in her body, and your body in the cold earth—you will have nothing to regret, since you will dwell in her, and in her happiness will be your joy."

The celestial phantom vanished in a luminous mist, and Wladimir Alexievich regained consciousness. He found himself in the hut of the Tongouze, near a fire of spruce wood. The old woman was muttering confused words, without seeming to take any notice of her guest of an hour. Terrified by what had been revealed to him, the young man tried to collect his thoughts, and get some clear idea of his strange adventure. He saw before him only a



**"HE SAW ADVANCING TOWARD HIM A CELESTIAL SHAPE."**

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commonplace and filthy hag, who had placed him *en rapport* with the spirits, as the door-keeper of a temple opens to the worshiper the sanctuary of the shining gods. He laid his hand on the old woman's shoulder. She turned toward him a dull glance, and in sardonic accents said :

"Well, have you learned what you desired to know?"

"By what means did you deprive me of consciousness of the external world?" he asked.

"What was it you gave me to drink?"

"What does it matter to you? Did you behold the spirits?"

"By what sorcery did you make them visible to me?"

"Ask that of them! They are here—all around you. Do you doubt it? Remain then without hope. Trust in them, and supreme delights await you!"

The sorceress seemed to grow in stature. Her countenance was ennobled with a rude dignity, and pointing to the door she said to Wladimir;



"Do not tempt Heaven. Go! And believe! believe!"

He dropped on the floor his purse, which the old woman pushed disdainfully toward the hearth with her foot. She extended her arms as if about to make a final invocation, and, her countenance glowing with an inspired light, she repeated in accents that vibrated in the breast of Wladimir Alexievich:

"Believe! poor child! In that is safety! Believe!"

He left the hut, returned to his house, wrote far into the night, and on the following day was found dead in his room.

"And did his betrothed recover her health," asked Pierre Laurier.

"She recovered her health," replied Davidoff, "but although she was beautiful and adored, she would give her hand to none of her suitors, and remained unmarried, as if she had desired to remain faithful to a mysterious and secret love."

"And do you believe in this miracle?" asked Jacques de Vignes with an effort.

Davidoff shook his head, and answered in a tone of raillery:

"Doctors do not believe in much, in the age in which we live. Materialism has many advocates among my colleagues. Yet magnetism has, in these latter days, taken on strange forms and opened new horizons to our gaze. We walk side by side with spiritualism, which testifies to the existence of the soul. And, to admit the influence of mental suggestion over subjects in the hypnotic sleep, is not this coming very near to a belief in a superior principle which directs and, as a consequence, governs matter?"

"You philosophize, my dear fellow," responded the prince, "but you do not answer."

"Oh, as for you, Patrizzi," said Pierre Laurier, laughing, "you believe in Saint Januarius, and in serious cases you invoke the aid of the Madonna; you carry branches of coral as a protection against the evil eye, and you turn pale when you see a knife and fork laid crosswise on the tablecloth; you are, consequently, already a convert to the juggleries of Davidoff."

But Jacques and I, we are tougher, and we need some proofs to convince us."

"Yet it would be pleasant to believe in a mysterious influence that could restore one to health," murmured the sick man. "Ah, to be able to cling to some supreme hope! would not that itself be health? Has not confidence half the merit in effecting a cure."

"Parbleu! Those are the most reasonable words that have been uttered for the last two hours," cried Pierre Laurier. "To the devil with your witches, your Swedenborgians, your lunar apparitions and your souls that pass from body to body, like the ferret of Bois-Joli. To give a sick person the assurance that he will recover, is almost sure to cure him; that is the truth! So take my friend Jacques de Vignes here present, who has had himself ordered south because he has taken a cold, make him understand that his malady is purely imaginary, that his lungs are not affected, that he commits a great mistake in thinking that they are,—in a word, prove to him that he has only a slight ailment, of no consequence whatever,

and doing away with the cause, you do away with the effect. The aforesaid Jacques de Vignes will be obliged to renounce his languid speech, his languishing airs, his Wertherian glances. He will return to a love for life, for a beefsteak, a cigar, a pretty woman—”

“Alas!” murmured Jacques, a severe fit of coughing shaking his frame. “If it were only possible for me to hope! I love life, and every day I feel my hold upon it growing weaker.”

The painter laid his hand on the shoulder of the sick man, and in a friendly voice said:

“You do not believe me when I tell you that you are not seriously ill; you do not believe Davidoff, who has examined you. You desire, in spite of everything, to nurse your uneasiness, and to torture yourself, as if for pleasure. You make your mother wretched by so doing, and you cause your sister to shed tears. Is there nothing, then, that will convince you; Must I do for you what Wladimir Alexievich did, and give you a soul in exchange for yours. I have only my own, as you know, and that is not of much account. Come, if I were to give

it to you some night, in a fit of spleen, it would not be a very splendid present. But one should not look a gift-horse in the mouth, and the important point is that you should live, you who have everything to make you happy, you who are loved, you who would be regretted. Whilst I—I might throw myself this moment from the terrace of the Casino into the sea, and who would regret the fool called Pierre Laurier, the artist powerless to grasp his ideal, the gambler grown indifferent to the emotions of the game, the lover scoffed at by his mistress, the *viveur* weary of life!"

He made the table shake with a blow of his clenched hand, his face distorted by a painful emotion and his lips curled in a bitter smile.

"I am stupid indeed to persist in beginning anew every morning the existence I curse every night! To the devil with it! Jacques, do you want my soul!"

"Come," said Jacques, "you have had another quarrel to-day with Clemence Villa. Give her up, my poor friend, since she makes you suffer so much."

"As if I could!" cried Pierre, growing very pale and pressing his hand to his forehead, which suddenly grew clouded.

"Beat her, then," said Patrizzi tranquilly.

"If I only dared!" cried the young man, his eyes flashing. "But I am the slave of that girl. She does with me whatever she wishes. Her vices, her follies, her infidelities, I put up with them all. At times I would like to kill her. And it is I myself I would strike in seeking to escape from her tyranny. Ah, I am cowardly and base. I know that she betrays me. I surprised her the other day in a meeting with an insignificant Italian baritone. She ruins me, she degrades me, she lowers me more than she does herself, yet I have not the strength to break my chain. I am indeed very unfortunate!"

"No, you are not unfortunate," said the doctor, "you are sick. Let us go out: it is stifling here."

"It is ten o'clock," said Jacques de Vignes. "The carriage must be in waiting for me. I am going back to Villefranche."

"Wrap yourself up well," said the prince; "the nights are cold."

The artist helped his friend on with his overcoat, wrapped a plaid around him, and at the foot of the stairs said to him in a voice that still vibrated with his recent emotion:

"Good-night. And remember—count upon my soul."

Dr. Davidoff put Jacques de Vignes into the carriage, closed the door, and gave the coachman his orders. Then, after listening for a moment to the noise of the carriage-wheels rolling on the sand, he slowly returned to the artist, who was looking at the stars while he waited for him.

"Shall we go to the Casino?" asked Patrizzi.

"What for? The night is so beautiful, let us walk."

"Which way do you go?"

"Toward Mentone."

"And you will pause, three-quarters of a mile from here, at the door of a villa of which the gate is covered with roses?"

"Yes."

"And you will come out in a moment, furious with others and with yourself. Do not go to see that girl."

"And where would you have me go? If, obedient to your wishes, I return to my hotel, in the solitude of my chamber, I shall think only of the woman you bid me shun. She holds complete sway over me—I confess it, and the ties that bind me to her must be strong indeed, since, notwithstanding the desperate efforts I have made, I have not been able to break them. After each effort I return to her, weaker and more enslaved than before, and I hate and despise myself for it."

"It is an easy matter, nevertheless, to leave a woman," said the Neapolitan, smiling. "Unhappily one does not find it out until it is too late. But one should make the effort, at all events. It is easy, however, to counsel philosophy to those who are suffering. Good-night, gentlemen. I am going to break the bank."

He lit a cigar, and went away. Davidoff and Pierre Laurier continued their walk through the gardens bathed in the moonlight. The air



was mild and fragrant. They left the town, and to their right at the base of the rocks along the shore they could see the sea, shining like a silver mirror. The night was so bright that the lights of the vessels in the distance shone red and tremulous. They ascended the acclivity in silence. They paused a moment near a clump of mastic and cactus bushes, their glances piercing into space, and oppressed, as it were, by the expanse before them. A sudden noise, as of an animal rising abruptly from a thicket, arrested their attention, and a moment later they saw running up the path on the side of the acclivity a man carrying a gun that glittered in the moonlight.

"What is that?" asked Davidoff, in surprise.

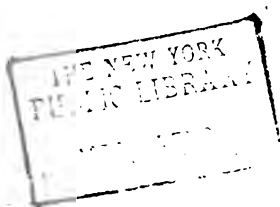
Pierre Laurier looked at the man attentively, and then answered:

"A custom-house officer."

They paused. The man continued to ascend the hill. Arrived on the flat, he looked at the two pedestrians suspiciously. The spot was deserted, although they had left the last house not more than two miles behind them,



**"HE LOOKED AT THE TWO PEDESTRIANS SUSPICIOUSLY."**



but the whole coast is a wild one and favorable to the enterprises of smugglers.

"Do you take us for contrabandists?" said the artist.

"No, sir," replied the officer, "not now that I see you near by; but below there, when I saw you stand motionless, I thought you had just given some signal."

"Are there smugglers in the country, then?"

"Oh, there always are. It is between Monaco and Vintimille that smuggling is most generally carried on. There is not a week in which some smuggler is not caught. And for the past four days we have been watching a vessel which is waiting the chance to escape us. But the scoundrels will pay for the sleepless nights they have made us pass, and if they make any resistance they will be answered with musket-shots. Good-night, gentlemen. Do not remain here. The place is a bad one."

He raised his hand in a military salute to his kepi, and then disappeared among the bushes which served him for his post of observation.

Pierre Laurier and Davidoff resumed their walk, turning their steps toward the town.

"I envy the adventurous lot of the men who are the object of the threats of this fine soldier. They are sailing on the water at this moment, vigilant and circumspect, ready for business or for battle. Their affair finished, they depart on a new expedition to brave unknown dangers. They have no thought but for their hard and uncertain occupation. I should like to be in their place."

"So! Count Woreseff, whom I shall accompany in his yacht, leaves Villefranche the day after to-morrow. He is going to Egypt; we touch at Alexandria, sail up the Nile as far as the second cataract, visit Thebes, the desert, and the Pyramids. It is an expedition that will take two months, with the planks of a magnificent vessel under foot and the splendors of an Eastern sky overhead. You know how happy the Count would be to take you with him. You would be occupied; you would hunt. And above all, you would forget."

"No! I should be too tranquil, too much

spoiled, too happy, in your company. I should have to brave none of those dangers that absorb all one's faculties. I should have no crushing hardships to endure. Everything around me would savor too much of civilization. What I need is to lead the life of a savage. If you could promise to have me captured by the Touaregs, who should take me a prisoner to Timbuctoo, I would follow you. In my case that would be salvation!"

"I can promise you no such adventures," replied Davidoff, laughing. "I must therefore abandon you to your fate."

They had stopped before a beautiful villa, painted rose color, whose windows shone in the moonlight through the thick foliage.

"It is settled—you will go in," said the doctor. "Good-by, then, for I do not know if I shall see you to-morrow,—and good fortune attend you."

They shook hands, and while the Russian took his way toward the city the artist crossed the garden and rang the door-bell. A lackey opened the door for him, and led him into a

vestibule resembling a Moorish patio, with a basin in the middle, on the blue bosom of which floated cyprians with scales of gold. Around the columns which adorned this court roses twined. At the further end a white marble staircase led to the first story.

"Is Madame at home?" asked Pierre Laurier.

"She is in the little salon," responded the domestic.

The young man pushed the door open and softly entered.

On a large sofa, reclining among silken cushions, Clemence Villa was turning over the leaves of a book. She raised her head, stretched out her arms, and then remained motionless.

Pierre approached her, and bending over her delicately modeled face kissed her on the eyes.

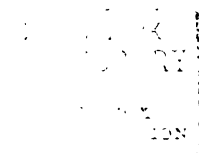
"How late you are!" said the actress, with a tranquil indifference that formed a contrast to the reproach conveyed in her words.

"Prince Patrizzi's dinner lasted longer than I had supposed it would," he answered.



**“PIERRE APPROACHED HER AND BENDING OVER HER DELICATELY MODELED  
FACE, KISSED HER.”**





"Did you enjoy yourself."

"Less than if you had been with us."

"I have a horror of Patrizzi."

"Why?"

"I feel that he hates me."

"No, he does not hate you: but he loves me."

"Well, can he not love you without hating me?"

"He would like you if you did not make me unhappy."

"Ah, the old story!"

The young woman snapped her fingers, threw her book to the further end of the salon, and with a gesture of displeasure turned over on the sofa, with her face toward the wall.

"Come, Clemence, let us be at peace," said the artist; "let us talk of something else."

The actress, however, her face buried among the cushions, replied in a sharp voice, without turning around:

"Your Patrizzi has been making advances to me, as you already know, and it is because I

would have nothing to say to him that he dislikes me."

The countenance of Laurier was contracted with pain, as he asked ironically:

"And why did you make so unflattering an exception in his case?"

Clemence Villa sprang to her feet at a bound, and red with anger, her eyes sparkling, her brow contracted in a frown, pointed to the door with a trembling hand, saying:

"My dear fellow, if you have come here to treat me with insolence, you can take yourself off again."

"Oh, I know how little you care for me; you have never allowed me to remain in ignorance on that point," said the painter with a despondent gesture.

"Then why do you not leave me? If you were good-tempered, even, I could understand your obstinacy on that point. But you divide your time between abusing me to your friends and insulting me here. And all because I will not yield to your caprices, and shut myself up to live alone with you. What an

enchancing prospect! In short, you are an ingrate. I was very fond of you—oh, you know it very well! For before you became crazy, you were an agreeable and charming fellow. But the fact is that, for the past three months, you have completely lost your head, so, good-night. As for me, I don't know how to take care of mad people: go to a lunatic asylum."

She leaned against the chimney-piece as she spoke, and, set off by her loose robe of ruby-colored plush, her dark skin gleamed like ivory. Her small head covered with curls, set on a rather long neck, was of an exquisite grace, and her bosom, enclosed, like a jewel in its setting, in costly Malines lace, heaved with her haughty anger.

Pierre slowly approached her, and seating himself on a low seat, almost at her feet,—

"Forgive me," he said. "I am unhappy, because I love you, and I am jealous."

She looked at him sternly and in a cutting voice said:

"So much the worse. Because I am no

more disposed to put up with your jealousy than with your brutality. For some time past I have had to make an effort not to tell you so. But I have had enough of it now. It is over! it is over! it is over! You may spare yourself the trouble of returning."

The artist grew a shade paler.

"You are dismissing me?" he said.

"Yes, I am dismissing you."

He remained silent for an instant, as if he hesitated to put his thought into words. Then in a low voice, as if he feared to provoke the answer he foresaw he should receive,—

"Do you love another, then?" he asked.

"What does that matter to you? I love you no longer; that is all it concerns you to know."

A flush mounted to the face of the young man; his hands trembled, and he bit the ends of his mustache, but affecting a smiling indifference,—

"Tell me, at least," he said, "if you have given me a worthy successor. One must have a little pride."



**"AND SEIZING THE ACTRESS BY THE WRISTS."**

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"Make yourself easy on that score," interrupted Clemence sharply; "I shall lose nothing by the change. He is young, he is rich, he is handsome. And then he has interested me for a long time past. Besides, you know him; he is a friend of yours."

And while the artist, thunderstruck at such audacity, asked himself whether he was dreaming or awake, the young woman continued, with relentless cruelty and dropping her words one by one like drops of poison:

"You have just left him; you dined together this evening."

"Davidoff?" exclaimed Pierre.

"Imbecile!" sneered Clemence. "That Russian cynic who despises women, and who would rule them with the knout! Do you think me so stupid? No, the man who has captivated my fancy is a charming fellow, gentle, melancholy, rather delicate in health, but who believes in love and surrenders himself to it without reserve."

Pierre started to his feet at these words, and seizing the actress by the wrists, forced her to



listen to him, notwithstanding her resistance. Their faces were close together, their glances met for an instant. They remained thus for a few moments, breathing hatred and rage. At last the painter said in a trembling voice:

"You mean Jacques de Vignes."

"I do."

"Do you know that his lungs are seriously affected?"

"Even so; he pleases me. I will nurse him. A disinterested affection has always had a charm for me."

"It is in order to torture me that you have invented this story. Confess that there is not a word of truth in all you have said."

"You shall see whether there is or not."

"Clemence, take care."

The young woman's eyes flashed with anger. She turned to pull the bell, but in her haste her feet caught in the folds of her gown. Pierre was just in time to seize her arm and prevent her from falling.

"You threaten me in my own house?" she cried. "Well, then I shall accept him. Yes,

I shall accept him; and it will be all your fault."

The painter, with a gesture of disgust, pushed her from him so abruptly that she fell backward on the sofa. He took his hat and in a choking voice said:

"Infamous creature! I had rather die now, than return to you. I shall never see you again!"

He pushed the door violently open with his clenched hand, as if to vent on inert matter the anger he could not vent on the woman who had called it forth, and with rapid steps went out into the garden. He heard the electric bell ring behind him under the quick pressure of an angry touch, the steps of the servant sounding on the pavement of the vestibule, and the sharp tones of Clemence issuing her orders. He did not stay to hear further. He felt a rage that gave him a desire to kill some one. He had left Clemence lest he should be tempted to strike her. But here under the starry sky, his brow fanned by the cool sea-breezes laden with the perfume of the orange-

blossoms, he began to feel a bitter sense of shame. Was it possible that for this woman's sake he had during the past year committed all the miserable follies that now came thronging to his memory? After spending all his fortune in order to supply the extravagance of Clemence, he had borrowed for the same purpose from his friends. His genius, dissipated by a life of pleasure, had produced no fruit, and he had spent whole days in his studio dreaming of pictures which he had never had the courage to undertake. And all for this jade who had deceived him. It was in truth too stupid; she was right to despise him for it, and it was an undeserved piece of good fortune for him that she had taken it into her head to dismiss him.

He felt himself, at this moment, once more master of his destiny. He was delivered from the ghoul who had sapped his mental strength at the same time that she had tortured his heart. He was himself again, and he was determined to prove by his works that he was not, as people had begun to say, a wreck.



"HE WAS WALKING ALONG THE SEA-SHORE."

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"Yes, she shall see what I am capable of, now that I am free from her," he cried. "Before a month is past she shall wish me back from vanity if not from love!"

While these thoughts were passing through his mind he was walking along the sea-shore on the road that led to Vintimille. In his agitation he had walked a great distance without being aware of it. The lights of Monaco had disappeared in the distance, and he found himself alone, at the foot of a rugged cliff. At his feet stretched the rocky shore, on which the waves broke with a monotonous sound. Occasionally a stray cloud passing across the moon hid its light, plunging everything into obscurity. Pierre sat down on a sandy hillock by the roadside, and lulled by the profound peace surrounding him, he fell into a reverie.

He had now become calmer; his anger had vanished, and he tried to form a clear idea of his situation. He had made excellent resolutions, but would he have sufficient strength of mind to carry them out? He knew how little dependence he could place on his force of char-

acter. A dozen times already he had sworn never again to see the woman who had wrecked his life, and each time he had returned to her, weaker than the last, and as a consequence was more ill-treated than before. But he had borne everything in order to obtain a caress from her. Strange madness, which, reducing him to this state of bondage, left him sense enough to form a correct judgment of the woman who held him in thrall, but not enough courage to withdraw from her evil dominion.

"After declaring so violently that I would never see her again," he said to himself, "can it be possible that I should be weak enough to present myself before her to-morrow? No," he cried aloud in the silence of the night. But, as if to put his resolution to the test, the face of Clemence with its brilliant and seductive eyes appeared before him. He could see it distinctly, smiling with a defiant air, and it seemed to him he could hear from her lips the words he had heard so often :

"You leave me? You have not the strength





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to do so. I might dismiss you and you would come back to me again, like a beaten dog, faithful to his master. Do you think you could live without me? Am I not necessary to your existence? Without me, the world for you is a void, where you can find only ennui, disgust, weariness, and regrets. Come back to me then! Pretend no silly pride. I send you away to-day, but I expect you back to-morrow. These are the quarrels of lovers, who fall out, and then kiss each other all the more passionately for their momentary anger."

The temptress evoked by his feverish imagination smiled at him, and with her white arm beckoned him on. He could see her distinctly, with the light falling upon her in her room. His heart beat to suffocation, and with a sigh he rose to his feet to go and rejoin her.

A cool breeze blowing across his forehead recalled him from his dream, and he found himself once more at the foot of the cliff, the sea stretching before him, far away from the town, and the image of the woman who had so completely subjugated him, vanished in the moon-

light. He trembled to find himself so completely in her power. If he had been in front of her villa instead of on the sea-shore, in an instant more, without giving himself time for reflection, he would have been at her feet. A paroxysm of rage seized him. She spoke truly, then; the apparition of a moment since had dared him to break his chain. What should he do then, so that he might never again fall into the power of this fatal woman? Would space suffice to separate him from her? How could he say that in some moment of madness he would not again return to her? Calm as he was now, completely in possession of his senses, strong in the hatred which had revived again within him, he did not dare to question himself lest he should be obliged to confess that there was no power strong enough to keep him from her.

A feeling of despair and profound discouragement came over him. Yet he comprehended all the unworthiness of his life, all the baseness of his conduct, all the ignominy of his complaisance. She deceived him and he knew

it, yet he had not sufficient pride to resolve to see her no more. And what anguish, what regrets did this existence contain, that would become more miserable, the weaker he showed himself to be! And what would be the end of it? An unworthy death in some jealous transport, a senseless and degrading suicide that would drag his name into the newspapers, inflicting suffering on the few friends who should still remain faithful to him. Would it not be better to end everything at once, here, under the deep blue sky, the sea stretching before him, while he was still worthy to cause sincere tears to flow?

He remained wrapped in meditation, bathed in the tranquil light of the moon, surrounded by fragrant odors. And little by little his thoughts were turned away from the woman who was his evil genius.

A peaceful and smiling dwelling, hidden among trees, now appeared before his mind. It was that in which his friend Jacques de Vignes lived, with his mother and sister. Life would have smiled upon them had not illness,

alarming and rapid in its progress, attacked this handsome and once robust young man so ardently attached to life. What did they lack in order to be happy? Health, for the son and brother so passionately loved, health only. But, irony of fate, each day Jacques grew more sad, more weak, more bent, as if to draw nearer to the earth which must soon hide him from view. And he was in despair about it, while Pierre would so gladly have given up his life at this moment when, overwhelmed with vexations, he reckoned it of so little worth. If he had been able to make a compact with his friend, and to cede him his own superabundance of strength, would this not be sufficient health for the sad and suffering young man whom he loved so tenderly?

At this moment the story of Dr. Davidoff came back to his mind, and a bitter smile crossed his lips. If this strange resurrection of which the doctor had told were possible, if the spell could be made to work, and if it were granted to him to make his soul pass, miserable and tortured as he was, into the languishing

body of his friend, in whom the force to live was so completely wanting, would it not be a blessed miracle?

He bowed down his head with sudden grief. He said to himself: "She told me she loved him. If I were to become he, I should then be beloved by her? I should enjoy her beauty and her grace. For me should be all her smiles and all her kisses." He trembled. It was so long since there had been tenderness in the caresses of her he still adored. He felt this now, without illusion or self-deceit, and yet he could not resolve to leave her.

In the silence of the night, surrounded by the rocks, before him the immensity of the sky and sea, he gathered together all the strength of his will for a supreme invocation. He called to his aid all the invisible powers. "If they exist as has been affirmed," he said to himself, "around us, in the air; if, impalpable as the air, mysterious beings surround us, let them reveal themselves to me by some sign which I can comprehend, and I shall be ready to obey them. I deliver myself up to them in self-sacrifice. A

being of flesh and blood, I shall enter the realm of the spiritual and I shall leave existence with delight so that I be no longer myself, and, as a consequence, be in pain no longer, no longer groan and sigh. Let them speak to me in the whisper of the breeze, the murmur of the waves, the rustling of the leaves, and to reach them I will pass through the gate of death."

As he finished this incantation he shuddered, terrified at the solitude in which he found himself. He looked fearfully around him. The cliff, the sea, the sky were silent and solitary. Suddenly the moon showed herself between the clouds, and in the luminous space it seemed to Pierre that white spectres passed. He looked down at the expanse of waters before him, and will-o'-the-wisps appeared among the rocks on the shore. Hither and thither they passed, brilliant and light, vanishing and reappearing ceaselessly, like the souls of shipwrecked mariners haunting the breakers on which the bodies they had inhabited had perished.

Fascinated, Pierre was unable to take his eyes from these vaporous phantoms, these wandering lights, and a species of torpor took possession of him. Murmuring sounds filled his ears. At first confused, they gradually resolved themselves into these words, like a chant: "Come with us, where suffering no longer exists. Die in order to live again, reincarnated in a being of your choice. Come with us!"

Pierre made an effort to rid himself of this hallucination, but without success. He felt himself deprived of force, incapable of making a movement, as if he were in a state of catalepsy. His gaze penetrated the depths of the sea and the sky, and supernatural accents vibrated in his ears. He thought to himself: "The revelation I demanded has been made. Spirits have manifested themselves to me. I believe in them, I will obey them,—but let them cease to possess me."

As if he had pronounced a magic formula the vision disappeared, the chant ceased. He rose and walked along the deserted shore, and he



might have thought that he had been dreaming. But he did not think so. He hoped the vision might be real; he saw in it the delightful end of all his ills.

Ascending to the summit of the cliffs, he stood there, took out his pocket-book, and wrote these words on a card:

"MY DEAR JACQUES: I am of no use to others and I am hurtful to myself. I wish to end this. I am going to try the experiment which Davidoff described to us. You are the being I love most on earth. I make you a present of my soul. Live happy through me, and for me."

He signed the card with his name, and taking his hat passed the folded paper between the felt and the silk band. He tranquilly divested himself of his overcoat and placed it at the side of the path together with his hat; then with quick steps went down again toward the sea. The coast curved at this point, forming a little bay, where the waves died away with a gentle murmur. A path, running up the side of the cliff, led to a little fishing vil-

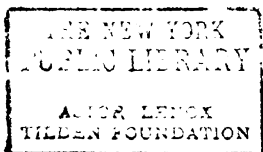
lage. The attention of Pierre was attracted by a bark coming slowly toward him, impelled by the breeze that swelled out its low sail. It seemed to be empty, but when it reached the strand sailors made their appearance everywhere. At the same time men sallied from behind the rock, and entering the water went toward the boat. Bales and casks encumbered the stern of the vessel.

The painter, interested, notwithstanding his depression, guessed that these were the smugglers of whom the custom-house officer had spoken. He sought this latter with his glance among the brushwood behind which he had hidden himself. He had doubtless quitted his post, for there was no sign of movement on the cliff. The men from the rocks had joined those on board the boat, which they had already begun to unload, when a whistle from the summit of the cliff interrupted the operation. The men ran along the beach, the sailors hastened to put out to sea. At the same moment a shot was heard in the silence, and a red flame lighted up the rocks. It was the

custom-house officer who thus made known his presence. At another point near by another shot was heard, and shadowy forms ran up the side of the rock. The men climbed up the path with their bales, the smugglers pushed their boat out into deep water. During this maneuver a sailor fell overboard. Signals were heard. It was the custom-house officers assembling. The boat reached the open sea, and the swimmer, left behind, cried out with all the strength of his lungs. His movements gradually became wilder and his voice more feeble. Pierre felt touched by the heartrending accents of this fellow-creature. A moment before he had thought only of dying, now he wished to save life. He hurried toward the beach, leaping from rock to rock, narrowly escaping several shots as he ran, reached the water, and throwing himself into the sea swam vigorously toward the drowning man. A few hundred yards away the boat had stopped. The smugglers had disappeared in the brushwood at the summit of the cliff, and on the sea, polished as a mirror, the moon cast her cold and tranquil light.



**"A VILLA PAINTED IN RED AND WHITE, ITS TERRACE COVERED WITH  
ORANGES AND MIMOSAS."**



## II.

**N**EAR the sea-shore, on the charming road that leads from Monaco to Nice, between Eze and Villefranche, but nearer to the latter, in a little bay formed by an abrupt fissure of the cliff stands a villa painted in red and white, its terrace, covered with oranges and mimosas, stretching down into the water. Fir trees, with red trunks and large branches, juniper trees with their blue-green foliage, black thuyas, grow together on the side of the hill, among fragments of rock, in the midst of briars, framing in with wild vegetation this tranquil valley, isolated and silent. A little harbor, protected by a natural jetty of reefs, against which the waves break in clouds of spray, contains two pleasure-boats, motionless in the calm and transparent waters to which the marine plants at the bottom give an emerald-green tinge. The red earth absorbs the rays of the sun and heats

the atmosphere of this sheltered spot where all day the temperature of a hothouse reigns. In the evening the air is exhilarating and laden with the exquisite odors exhaled by trees whose leaves never fall, of flowers that renew themselves ceaselessly. Little fishing-boats, plying between Beaulieu and Monaco, sail across the open sea and give an air of life to the horizon as they slowly pass. The noise of the railroad that runs behind the villa is the only sound that disturbs the silence of this peaceful spot. Here it was that, two months before, Madame de Vignes came to establish herself with her son and daughter, far from the agitation of the Parisian world, in the sweet and salubrious repose of this enchanting country.

Left a widow at thirty, after a married life made stormy by a dissipated husband, Madame de Vignes had consecrated herself with exalted intelligence and profound wisdom to the education of her children. Jacques, a tall and handsome boy, of an impassioned soul and enthusiastic nature, in spite of prudent counsels daily

received, soon gave signs of having inherited his father's faults. His sister Juliette, four years younger than he, had, by a happy contrast, inherited all her mother's serious wisdom. So that if the one was a source of grave anxiety to the mother, the other seemed made to console her for it. With these two, so different from each other, Madame de Vignes, up to the age of forty, lived a comparatively tranquil life. Jacques, extremely intelligent and tolerably industrious, had finished his studies with brilliant success. His health, delicate during his childhood, had become stronger as he grew up, and when he attained his majority, he was, with his tall stature, his long blonde mustache, and his blue eyes, one of the most charming young men one could see. He made no delay in abusing these advantages.

Put in possession of his father's fortune, he had freed himself from domestic restraints by installing himself in a handsome bachelor's apartment, and begun to lead a gay life. He remembered, however, from time to time to ask an invitation to dinner from his mother. On



these occasions he was often accompanied by one of the companions of his childhood, Pierre Laurier. On such evenings it was a festival at the villa, and Juliette lavished her tenderest attentions on her brother and her sweetest smiles on his friend, who, she imagined, rightly or wrongly, had an influence in bringing about these returns of the prodigal son. The evening passed joyously, thanks to the original turn of mind of the painter.

And while these hours fled all too rapidly, the young girl, for Mademoiselle de Vignes was at that time only fourteen, was ecstatically happy in the society of the two young men.

Pierre Laurier with his intelligent and mobile countenance, his piercing eyes, his sarcastic mouth, and thoughtful brow, had for a long time inspired her with fear. But she had soon discovered that his strange moods were only the consequence of his artistic preoccupations, and that his mocking accents served to mask the confiding goodness of his heart. In the midst of his fantastic discourse she could

very well discern his love for his art, to which he was devotedly attached, and in his passionate sallies she saw flash forth a love for the true and the beautiful. She divined, with singular penetration, that the painter made every possible effort to restrain Jacques in his dissipated life, and that the influence he exercised over him could not but prove favorable. This had made her like him all the more. And then his manner toward this child was like that of a brother. For her he softened the expression of his skepticism, and became innocent and playful to adapt himself to her.

In this he showed want of penetration, for Juliette, whose reasoning powers had been early developed, was quite capable of comprehending him. But Pierre persisted in seeing in her only a little girl, and it was always with astonishment that he heard her, when she allowed herself to be drawn into the conversation, put forth in a few timid phrases judgment extraordinarily just. He did not give her credit for them indeed; he said to himself: "This little girl is surprising; she remembers

what she hears and brings it in in the right place. In every woman there is something of the ape, to imitate, and of the parrot, to repeat!"

If Juliette, however, had, where art was concerned, a precious faculty of assimilating the knowledge of others, she was altogether herself in the tender effusiveness of the thanks she bestowed on Laurier for his protecting care of her brother. Here she neither imitated nor repeated. It was the very heart of the child that spoke, and the painter, however absorbed he might be by preoccupations of which Mlle. de Vignes was singularly ignorant, could not avoid being struck by her emotion and her gratitude.

A little incident, of which he had caught the true significance, had just occurred, however, which completely opened his eyes. He had been in the habit of bringing this child, whom he had known since her infancy, a present on Saint Juliette's day. When she was a child these presents had been dolls, extraordinarily attired in magnificent robes, made according

to the taste and after the suggestions of the painter, as if they had been meant to pose for one of his pictures. Each time he came to partake of the family dinner, carrying in his arms his annual gift, there were exclamations of surprise and cries of joy. Laurier would take the child by the shoulders, imprint a sounding kiss upon each cheek, and say in his sarcastic accents:

"This doll is beautiful, is it not? She is a Venetian—of the time of Titian!"

Then he would begin to chat with Mme. de Vignes and Jacques, without taking any further heed of the little girl lost in ecstatic contemplation of the porcelain patrician dressed in silk and gold. When Juliette was fourteen, however, dolls, he began to think, were now out of place, and he set about finding a more sensible gift. He selected a little work-box of the eighteenth century, garnished with beautiful implements in silver gilt, of exquisite design, and, according to his habit, arrived with it at the dinner hour. On this particular evening only Jacques was in the salon. The two

friends shook hands, and Laurier asking where Juliette was,—

"My mother is dressing her," answered Jacques. "It is an important affair—her first long dress. Our friends have wished to celebrate the occasion. So, what do you think! Her hair also had to be arranged differently. It would not do, as formerly, to wear one's hair hanging loose over one's shoulders—a chignon was a necessity!"

He was still laughing when the door opened, and instead of the little girl Laurier expected to see, a young girl, a little timid, a little awkward, altogether changed, but charming, entered the room. She did not run to the painter as usual with girlish curiosity. She extended to him her hand gracefully, and paused, silent and embarrassed, before the two young men. Pierre observed her with a smile.

"You look very well so, Juliette," he said. "If I might be allowed to make a slight criticism, I would say that I disapprove of the little curls over the forehead. You have a beautifully shaped face, and the hair well set. Put

them back then, uncompromisingly. It looks younger, and I am sure it will be very becoming to you."

Then, taking from his pocket the present he had brought,—

"See," he said, "this is a useful article. I, also, treat you like a grown-up person to-day."

"Oh, how pretty!" she cried, her eyes sparkling with joy. "Look, Jacques!"

"This is an object of art, my child. This painter has committed an extravagance. You should give him a kiss, at least."

This had been her habit. For many years past Pierre had kissed Juliette on this day, and yet they remained, for an instant, facing each other in embarrassment. Was it the long dress or the new mode of arranging her hair that caused them both this embarrassment? Or was it rather this sudden blooming of the child into the young girl, like a rosebud opening in the sunshine. Be that as it may, the painter did not now feel, as on former occasions, the spontaneous impulse to give a brotherly kiss to Juliette.

It was necessary for Jacques, who observed them with some surprise, to say :

"Well, what's the matter? Don't you know each other any longer?"

Then Mlle. de Vignes took a step forward, Pierre took two, and they found themselves in each other's arms. The young man bent his face down toward that of his little friend. She raised herself slightly on the tips of her toes, and, with strange emotion, Laurier saw that she trembled and turned pale at his kiss. All the evening he remained preoccupied, speaking rarely, as if absorbed by some secret disquietude.

From this time on, in his intercourse with Juliette, he showed himself more circumspect, watching every word he said. At the same time his gaze returned continually to the young girl, whom a week before he had treated like a baby. And he could not but confess that a rapid transformation had taken place in her. Her figure had acquired a flexible roundness, her complexion a velvety brilliance. Her movements had lost the vivacity of childhood

and were more restrained and elegant. The commonplace chrysalis had opened, and a brilliant butterfly, which irresistibly attracted the attention, had emerged from it. This metamorphosis produced in the mind of Pierre an agitation which he found difficulty in mastering.

He began to dream of things altogether different from those which up till now had occupied his thoughts. Artistic triumphs, the free existence suited to them, the stimulus given to thought by variety of sensation, all that had constituted the programme of his life, in the past, was now regarded by him as ridiculous and contemptible. He thought now that the tranquillity of domestic life, the peace of the heart, the even course of days well employed might contribute as surely as these to the achievement of great works, and that there was more probability of inspiration in regularity of labor than in spasmodic efforts. Marriage seemed to him like a fresh source at which to acquire new vigor. He began to think of settling down, of giving proof of wisdom, and he



allowed himself to regard Mlle. de Vignes with a tenderness which had nothing in common with the feeling he had entertained for her in other days.

No one perceived this, but Juliette herself. Neither her mother, too much occupied with the dissipation in which Jacques lived, nor Jacques, too much engaged with his own pleasures, suspected for an instant what was passing in the mind of the painter. Juliette, at first astonished at this rapid change in the sentiments of her friend, then happy in thinking herself loved by one whom she regarded as a superior being, was soon destined to experience the bitterness of disappointment. The flame thus kindled, which had promised to burn with ardor, was as suddenly extinguished. Pierre, who of late had been a frequent visitor at the house of Mme. de Vignes, now came only occasionally, as before. And all the flattering hopes, cherished in secret by the young girl, vanished like a dream.

She did not easily resign herself to this change, however, but determined to discover.

if possible, the cause of it. One evening, when Jacques came to the house alone to spend a few moments with his mother, Juliette hazarded an expression of surprise at their no longer seeing Pierre Laurier.

"Is he not now in Paris?" she asked.

"He is," responded Jacques, "but he scarcely ever leaves his studio. He has a fever for work."

The young girl breathed again. Work was a rival she did not fear.

"And what is he painting?" she asked.

"A portrait."

At these words, uttered carelessly by her brother, Juliette trembled. She felt as if they contained a menace to her peace. This portrait could not be an ordinary one. And this work, to which Pierre devoted himself with such ardor, was destined to have an influence over the destiny of them all. She saw everything grow dark around her, as if the sun had suddenly hidden himself behind a cloud. Sorrowful presentiments oppressed her heart.

"And this portrait is that of some one he knows?" she resumed.

"Oh, of some one he knows very well."

"Of whom, then?"

"An actress."

"What is her name?"

Jacques began to laugh; and looking at his sister in surprise, he said:

"How inquisitive you are to-night! I should like to know how it can possibly interest you to learn whether the original of Pierre's portrait be called Mlle. This or Mlle. That."

"It interests me, however."

"Well, then, the lady of the portrait is Mlle. Clemence Villa. She is small, dark, has black eyes, beautiful teeth, an execrable reputation, and very little talent. Notwithstanding, she has been talked about and is a great success. Do you wish to know what her age is? Twenty-four or thereabouts. Her country? Beautiful Italy, the land of vermouth and sausages. Her belief? She advocates the community of goods, if not where money is con-

cerned, at least where the heart is. But you are making me say stupid things. This is what comes of talking to children. Let it suffice you to know that the portrait is good, and that Pierre's reputation will not suffer through it."

The conversation turned on other things, but the painful impression received by Juliette remained. Her thoughts dwelt, in spite of herself, on this woman whom she could not avoid thinking ill of, and she had a jealous fear that she was loved by the artist who was painting her picture. "It is she who has taken him away from me," she thought. "It is since he has known her that he has ceased to visit us. He is ashamed to come."

In her naïve deductions Juliette was not far from the truth. Pierre experienced now, when at Mme. de Vignes' house, a feeling of embarrassment. He felt that he was observed by the sister of his friend. His conscience was not at rest, and he reproached himself with having drawn back too suddenly after advancing with too little consideration. He deemed

himself blamable, and divined that he was blamed. This inspired him with a feeling of dissatisfaction which kept him away from the girl he respected too much to dream now of loving. "You have behaved, my boy," he said to himself, "like a veritable scoundrel. You have risked endangering the peace of mind of this child, in order to satisfy a nascent caprice, and then you have changed in your feelings and your thoughts at the will of the first worthless woman you chance to meet. Keep now to your jades; you are fit only for them, you are made to understand each other. Aspire no more to the purity, the sweetness, the joy of a chaste and holy affection; look no longer for the innocence, the freshness of a young girl. The snow that has not been trodden on is not for you; you have chosen instead the mud which has been trampled upon by every passing foot."

And in order to conform to the rule of conduct imposed upon him by his bitter cynicism, the painter threw himself into pleasure more ardently than before, seeking the less to curb

the excesses of Jacques now that he himself participated in them.

Laurier seemed made of iron; he carried both pleasure and work to excess. After the wildest nights he was to be found in his studio, palette in hand, as if he had left his bed refreshed after eight hours' sleep. A more metallic vibration than ordinary in his voice, a more pronounced feverishness in his movements, alone betrayed his fatigue. And when evening came, he was ready to begin the same thing over again.

Jacques, on the contrary, his form more and more bent, his chest more and more hollow, and his glance more and more dull, bore in his whole person the fearful traces of a physical exhaustion every day more complete. His mother tried to draw him back to her, to snatch him from his killing mode of life. He promised to remain with her, to take the rest he needed, to break from his habits, his friendships, his train of pleasures. He could not do so, and Mme. de Vignes saw, with profound despair, the son journey as the father had

done, on the road of which each stage, so familiar to her, was marked by anguish, and whose end was swift and certain death.

The opening of the Exposition had meantime taken place, and, secretly impelled by a sharp feeling of curiosity, Juliette asked her mother to take her to it. Modern paintings interested her only slightly. What attracted her with irresistible power was the portrait of Clemence Villa, the sitting for which had coincided so fatally with the change in the sentiments of Pierre Laurier. Accompanied by her mother, who had no suspicion of her feelings, Mademoiselle de Vignes passed rapidly and with indifference through the halls where thousands of useless canvases were displayed to view in their cold mediocrity. Suddenly she stopped; before her, at the end of the hall, not twenty steps away, the portrait in a black frame of a woman, small, dark, and pale, had caught her eye. Instantly, without having ever seen her, she had recognized whose it was. It was she. There was no possibility of a doubt. No other woman would have pos-



**"THE PORTRAIT IN A BLACK FRAME OF A WOMAN, SMALL, DARK AND PALE,  
HAD CAUGHT HER EYE,"**



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sessed this beauty, fatal and almost evil, which strikes a chill to the heart. Juliette, with an effort, broke through the circle of admirers standing before the picture, and approached it.

Her mother, following her, looked at the portrait tranquilly, and said in a tone of satisfaction :

"Stay, it is the picture of Pierre Laurier. Ah! it is indeed a remarkable portrait."

Juliette turned slightly pale. That which her mother had just said, she herself had thought at the same instant with a profound pang. Yes, the picture was a remarkable one, and the genius of the painter had never before reached so high a point. In the fine lights of the head covered with a hat adorned with plumes, in the play of light and shade, in the coloring of the shoulders, draped in a ravishing costume of the time of Louis XVI., in the coquettish pose of the hand resting on a walking-stick, in the brilliance of the eyes and in the charm of the smile, the inspiration of love was betrayed. He who had seen so much beauty in this woman, and who had repro-

duced it with so much passion, was madly in love with her. And her voluptuous grace made this comprehensible, if not excusable.

Tears came to the eyes of the young girl and her heart beat to suffocation. Surrounded by the admiring crowd, who repeated aloud the names of the painter and of the model, *Mademoiselle de Vignes* suffered horribly. Two young men who had taken up their stand before the portrait, beside her, and who did not care whether they were heard or not, ended their eulogies by these words:

"Besides, he is her lover."

Juliette blushed as if she had received an insult, and, trembling at the thought that she might hear other words which should enlighten her still more cruelly regarding the mystery which she was at once eager and unwilling to know, she drew her mother into the next hall.

From this day forth she became more grave, with a gravity that had in it a shade of melancholy, which did not, however, attract the attention of *Madame de Vignes*. The two women had only too many reasons for sorrow,

and Juliette would have astonished her mother more by a display of gayety than of sadness. The summer passed in the solitude of the country, Jacques continuing at the watering places, Trouville and Dieppe, his life of pleasure, and presenting himself at longer and longer intervals at his mother's house; Pierre had altogether disappeared, devoting himself completely to work, as they saw by the frequent appearance of canvases which bore his name in the picture shops. Never did time appear longer or more sad to the two women, than did the months from June to October. They had leisure to think of all the anxieties the future had in store for them.

The weather was magnificent, the sky was without a cloud, and a delicious warmth pervaded the atmosphere. In the evening the mother and daughter walked in the garden, watching the stars appearing one by one in the clear heavens. And the calmness of nature formed a painful contrast to the agitation of their minds. They walked beside each other without speaking, for each wished to

hide her sorrow from the other, choosing the darkest walks so that the expression on their faces might not be seen. They felt as if surrounded by a void. The two beings who for them were all the world were far away, and everything else had become indifferent to them. The charms of nature were unnoticed by them. The sweetness of the breeze laden with the aromas arising from the earth, the clearness of the mysterious depths of the heavens, the rustling of the leaves shaken by the breeze overhead, all that would have charmed them if they had had beside them, to share their feelings, the dear ones who were absent, left them cold and unmoved. And every day, every evening, the same sense of weariness weighed heavily upon them.

Juliette was developing rapidly; she had grown in stature and her face had become charming. She was now seventeen, and her gravity gave her a womanly air. Her mother took delight in dressing her. The partiality she had always had for her son did not blind her so completely as to prevent her observing



"YOU ARE REALLY GROWING PRETTY."



the budding charms of her daughter. She said to the latter one day, after having looked at her for a long time in silence :

“You are really growing pretty.”

A smile flitted across Juliette's face, and she shook her head without speaking. Of what use was her beauty? He whom she wished to admire it was not here.

The autumn had just set in, when an alarming piece of news summoned Madame de Vignes unexpectedly to Paris. Her son, after having struggled foolishly with a weakness that gave him no respite, had fallen suddenly ill. He had been seized with a hæmorrhage, and, in a dying condition, they had transported him to his mother's house. The anguish of this blow cut short the reveries of the young girl. She adored her brother, and hastening to his side with her mother, she had been terrified by the state in which she had found him. He had scarcely the strength to lift his head, when they entered his room. Of the handsome Jacques there remained nothing but a shadow. A consultation of physicians, summoned at



once, ordered his immediate departure for the South, and since the last of November the de Vignes had been installed in the villa washed by the waters of the blue sea, and sheltered by pine and juniper trees, among the red rocks.

Here Jacques had grown better. Youth has exhaustless resources. The warmth, the light, the regularity of the life he led, had exercised their salutary influence upon him, and if the invalid was not completely cured, he had at least regained so much strength as to leave room for hope. He went about, pale, stooped, with trembling steps, shaken by fits of violent coughing, but he lived, and with great care he might continue to live for a long time to come. It was not enough, however, for Jacques to have obtained this result, and the alleviation he had experienced in his sufferings did not satisfy him. With strength his old desires had returned, and the impossibility of gratifying them produced in him an irritation which betrayed itself in bitter words and violent recriminations. He was ceaselessly contrast-

ing, in his embittered mind, what he had been with what he now was. His present state of debility seemed insupportable when he compared it with his past activity, and he made use of his recovered strength only to give utterance to complaints and curses. He accepted his fate, not with resignation or sweetness, but with lamentation and bitterness.

The arrival of Pierre Laurier, however, had made a happy diversion in his sufferings. He felt more courageous and less hopeless in the society of his friend. All that he had lately looked on with indifference or disgust had again begun to have an attraction for him. He no longer remained the entire day stretched in his *chaise longue*, or buried in his willow invalid chair, on the terrace. He walked and drove during the warm hours of the day, and the diversion had a favorable influence on his health. He was less gloomy, he consented to receive visitors, and he had not repulsed the offer made him by the painter, to bring to the villa a Russian physician, a strange character, regarded as a charlatan by his colleagues, but

celebrated for the extraordinary cures he had made.

Dr. Davidoff, installed at Monaco with his friend Count Woreseff, was the only son of a grain merchant of Odessa, who had left a fortune of ten millions at his death. He had therefore been able to follow the dictates of his fancy, and, disdaining a regular practice, devote himself to the study of humanity in its physical ills and moral sufferings. He had very soon succeeded in acquiring an influence over the imagination of Jacques. His system was to inspire those he treated with confidence, assuring them that immediate well-being would be the result of this feeling.

"Have the conviction that you will get well," he said to Jacques, "and you are already half-way on the road to recovery. Nature will take care of the rest. She only asks to be helped in her efforts to bring about a cure. Above all things it is necessary that the sick should not abandon hope. I have seen miracles wrought by the power of the will and by faith. The effects of the waters of Salette and

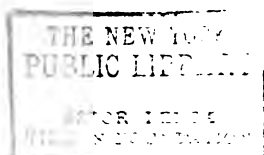
of Lourdes, in your country, are due to no other cause. The virtue of the beverage is in the soul of him who drinks. Having the certainty that the holy water will produce its effect upon him, he already feels the expected benefit. This is why it is useless to send the incredulous on those pilgrimages in search of health, just as skeptics should not assist at spiritual séances. They have within them forces which react against the efforts of the adepts and which neutralize the fluids. Never, in such circumstances, will experiments succeed. In the same way the mysterious efforts of nature to effect a cure will never produce a favorable result in an organization weakened by fear and depressed by doubt. Jesus, who was one of the greatest thaumaturgists of antiquity, said to those who asked him to cure them: 'Believe; in faith is everything.'

These curious theories of the Russian doctor had begun by interesting Jacques; then the seed sown had insensibly taken root in his mind and rapidly borne fruit. There were hours during which the sick man hoped once

more, and said to himself, "Why, indeed, should I not recover?" He called to mind examples of wonderful cures from maladies further advanced than his, and from which the patients had so completely recovered that not a trace of their illness had remained. And the subjects of these cures were now leading free and joyous lives, like the healthiest and most vigorous of men. Oh, to live, to go, to come, without restraint, without uneasiness, to be able to follow his inclinations, without fearing the result. To be delivered from nurses and doctors, to afford to despise precautions, and not to have to think continually of his health; to be able to commit imprudences at his pleasure. What a dream! Should he ever be able to realize it? In so ardently desiring health, he had but one aim in view—to begin again the life of dissipation which had brought him to this miserable condition. When he gave vent in the presence of Pierre to his regrets and his aspirations, his friend would shake his head with a melancholy air, and say with profound bitterness:



**"WHAT IS THERE FOR ME TO REGRET LEAVING?"**



"And is pleasure, then, worth longing so ardently for? Could there be anything vainer or more deceitful? Ah! to long for success and fame—that I can understand; to put forth all one's energies in the struggle to conquer them—that is worthy of a man. But to spend one's days and nights in playing cards or courting women—could anything more senseless or more deplorable be conceived? Yet I who criticise so severely this manner of life lead it myself. But I am a stupid and contemptible fool, who have no longer the energy to earn the money by work which I expect from chance."

He laughed drearily. Then he resumed more calmly:

"After all, I am wrong to judge others by myself. You are loved, you are happy, and life has pleasures for you still. I am mocked and scorned, and the only joys I experience are so bitter that their remembrance weighs more heavily upon me than do my sorrows. What is there for me to regret leaving? Nothing. By whom should I be mourned? By no one. Your life, on the contrary, is necessary to those



who love you, to your mother, to your sister. It is for their sakes that you must get well. It is of them only that you must think. Ah, if I had beside me always a sweet and charming companion whose affection would console me for all my sufferings, I should have the courage to make the effort to elevate my moral nature and to become another man. In the hours of my most profound dejection I have often thought that if I had some one to whom to devote my life I might show myself to be as good a man as the best. But I am alone! To the devil with wisdom! When I shall have committed follies enough, I shall dash my brains out against one of those beautiful red rocks at the foot of the cliff, and the waves will lull me to rest in my last sleep, like a faithful friend."

Pierre Laurier did not give way to these fits of melancholy when alone with his friend only. Sometimes, in the presence of Madame de Vignes and of Juliette, he had allowed his irritation of mind to break forth in bitter words. If, at such moments, he had chanced to look at

the young girl he would have discovered, in the pained and distressed expression of her countenance, one of those incentives for reforming which he had desired of fate. But he did not trouble himself about the effect his words might produce. He thought only of giving sincere expression to his despondent feelings. Fool! The boon he so ardently longed for shone like a luminous star in the darkness of his sky. He wished for a sweet and charming being to whom he might make the sacrifice of his evil passions, and she was close beside him, pitying his sorrows, and suffering with his anguish.

Notwithstanding the grief caused her by these dark moods of her brother's friend, Juliette did not complain of her fate. She saw Pierre—tortured with anxieties, sombre and capricious indeed—but she saw him. In Paris she never saw him, consequently she had gained something by the change. She knew that the woman who exercised so evil an influence over him was at Monte Carlo, but she knew also that the painter no longer spent

all his time with her. If the chain was still riveted the links were loosening, and some day would doubtless end by breaking. This was her only hope. She had not much pride. But has one ever any pride who loves? On the day following the dinner which had been so strangely terminated by Doctor Davidoff's story, at about ten o'clock in the morning Juliette, her blonde head protected by an umbrella, and a little basket on her arm, was walking along the terrace gathering flowers. The weather was delightful. The blue of the sea blended into the blue of the sky. A delicious breeze laden with salt odors came from the ocean. The waves, fringed with silver, died away at the foot of the rocks that bordered the solitary little bay. Accompanied by his mother Jacques left the house and began to walk slowly up and down in the sun.

Mme. de Vignes was a small and slender woman with a delicate face, expressive black eyes, and an intellectual forehead crowned with hair which had turned prematurely white. Her countenance wore the calm expression of



**"JULIETTE, HER BLONDE HEAD PROTECTED BY AN UMBRELLA, WAS WALKING  
ALONG THE TERRACE GATHERING FLOWERS."**

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a resignation that had become habitual with her. She walked softly and in silence, casting a glance from time to time at her son as if to measure the progress caused in his convalescence by the climate of the South. Jacques, stopping in the middle of the terrace, and seating himself on the stone parapet which was warmed by the rays of the sun, watched through the crystal clearness of the water the strange colors of the submarine vegetation. Sitting in the warm atmosphere, his head bared to the breeze, he forgot his illness, and felt stealing over him a vivifying sense of well-being. His sister approached him, having gathered her flowers, and softly kissing him said :

"How do you feel this morning? Did you sleep well last night? It seemed to me late when you came home."

The sick man smiled at the recollection of the follies in which he had once consumed his nights, and taking a spray of mimosa from the young girl's basket answered :

"Oh, very late, indeed ! It was past ten !"

"You are laughing at me. That does not alter the fact, however, that you went out last night for the first time since we have been here."

"My doctor gave me permission to do so. He was one of the guests—and a doctor never finds the pleasures in which he himself participates hurtful."

Juliette remained silent for a moment, then asked with a serious air:

"Do you like this Doctor Davidoff?"

"Yes, he is an agreeable companion, and his scientific knowledge is genuine and profound notwithstanding the satanic character it sometimes assumes. Besides, I do not believe he is so demoniac as he tries to appear. But it is an incontestible fact that since he has been attending me I am better."

"Ah, my dear boy," cried Mme. de Vignes, "that alone would make him seem divine to me. Let him be what he will, if he will only cure you. In any case he is perfectly well-bred and of good social standing. But he might be a rustic and I would still adore him. All

I ask from him is to give you back your health."

"He is to come this morning to see if my last night's dissipation was injurious to me. This will be, unfortunately, one of the last visits he will make us. He starts very soon for the East with his friend and patient Count Woreseff."

"The Russian to whom the beautiful white yacht anchored in the roadstead of Villefranche belongs?"

"The same."

"Was he one of the guests last night?"

"No; he scarcely ever leaves his vessel. It is said that he guards there, with jealous care, a Circassian whom he has carried off, and who is reputed to be the most perfect beauty it is possible to imagine. Her apartment is furnished with Oriental splendor. She is served by women sumptuously attired. In the evening the most exquisite music may be heard from the vessel. It is produced by musicians on board hired to divert the Count and his lady-love. This is the person with whom Davidoff



is to sail for the land of the Thousand and One Nights."

"I do not think he is very much to be pitied," said Mme. de Vignes gayly.

"Last night he did his best to persuade Pierre to accompany them. Woreseff, who adores artists, had thought of taking with him a painter who might make some sketches of the principal episodes of the journey."

"And your friend did not consent?" asked Juliette with a forced smile.

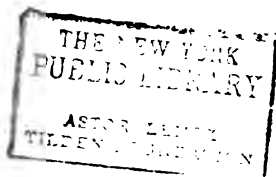
"No, he is contemplating another journey, but he wishes to make it alone."

These words, which had so ominous a sound, were followed by a moment's silence.

Jacques, suddenly struck by the sinister meaning which might be given to words uttered by him without any *arrière pensée*, remained thoughtful, recalling the bitter expressions to which Pierre had so often given utterance. Juliette looked at her brother with a pang at her heart, divining his painful emotion, and herself unable to recover from the shock she had received. It seemed as if both of them were



**"THE RUSSIAN DOCTOR . . . LOOKING VERY SERIOUS . . .  
ADVANCED TOWARD THEM."**



about to meet with some misfortune of which those words were the threatening presage. And they were silent, assailed by lugubrious presentiments. The rolling of carriage-wheels on the route to Beaulieu recalled them from their painful thoughts. They looked at one another in silence, and each was frightened at the other's pallor. Then they turned their eyes to the gate of the villa, before which a carriage had stopped.

The Russian doctor, dressed in black and looking very serious, descended from the vehicle and advanced toward them. Jacques rose, and assuming a more cheerful look went forward to meet his early visitor.

"Faithful to your promise, my dear David-off," he said, pressing his friend's hand. "How many thanks I owe you for all your attentions to me!"

The doctor saluted Mme. de Vignes and her daughter. His countenance was cold and impassive. Jacques looked at him with astonishment and Juliette with terror. Why this constrained attitude, this silent greeting?

What was it he feared to tell? What had happened that caused him to wear this mournful countenance and gloomy air? The Russian raised his eyes toward Jacques, and slowly, as if seeking to prolong a situation which deferred some painful communication, said:

"Do you feel well this morning? Did you sleep soundly last night? Have you any fever to-day?"

He felt Jacques's pulse, holding his wrist for a few moments between his fingers.

"No; it is stronger. You can be treated like a man now," he added.

Jacques looked at the doctor and in a hollow voice said:

"Has anything happened serious enough to require such precautions?"

Davidoff nodded in the affirmative, without speaking.

"And you hesitated to tell me of it?" resumed Jacques.

"Yes."

"And now?"

"And now I am ready to tell you."

He lowered his voice a little so as not to be heard by the mother and sister of the young man and said:

"It would be better, however, to wait until we are alone."

They all walked slowly toward the house. When they were in front of the veranda which ran before the windows of the parlor, the blinds of which were partly closed to shut out the sun, Mme. de Vignes and Juliette paused. The young girl looked at the doctor anxiously. She felt that the mysterious words he had just spoken had some secret connection with the thoughts that had troubled her at the moment of his arrival. The image of Pierre Laurier appeared before her, pale and indistinct, and seeming as if vanishing into nothingness. The serious communication which Davidoff had to make related, she was sure, to the painter. Of what nature was it? A shudder passed through her frame. On this beautiful sunny morning she felt cold. She saw the blue heavens veil themselves in obscurity, the sea grow

dark, the verdure of the pine trees lose its color. A knell sounded in her ears. Overcome by her funereal hallucination, her brain whirled and the earth seemed slipping from under her feet.

The voice of her mother pronouncing her name recalled her to herself. Her eyes unclosed, her vision grew clear, and the sky was once more bright, the sea blue, the trees green. Nature was still the same; her heart alone was oppressed with anguish, and her mind filled with gloomy foreboding.

"Come, Juliette," repeated Mme. de Vignes. "I think your brother wishes to be alone with the doctor."

The young girl cast an appealing glance at the Russian, as if it depended upon him whether the calamity she feared had taken place or not, then with a deep sigh she went into the house.

The two men had seated themselves near one of the iron columns supporting the glass roof of the veranda, around which twined clusters of fragrant heliotrope. They remained

silent for a moment, each thinking of the revelation which was to come.

Then Jacques, with the egotism of the invalid, said tranquilly:

"What have you to tell me, my dear friend?"

"A very sad piece of news, very sad indeed. It was brought to me this morning, and I confess that I am still completely overwhelmed by it. If it were not necessary that you should be told of it, I would have deferred my painful task, but it so nearly concerns you—"

Jacques, grown suddenly nervous, interrupted him:

"What a preamble! How am I concerned in what you have to tell me?"

"That is what you are now about to learn," replied Davidoff, looking at his patient so intently that his glance seemed almost stern. "At about one o'clock this morning a suicide was committed, close by Monte Carlo. A man threw himself from the cliff into the sea. Some custom-house officers, making their rounds, found his overcoat, his hat, and a few words—addressed to you."



"To me!" exclaimed Jacques, turning pale.

"To you. The articles were taken to the Governor, who, knowing how intimate we are, caused me to be notified in order that I might break the news to you."

Jacques's eyes seemed suddenly to recede in his head, and his mouth twitched convulsively as he said:

"It concerns some one, then, with whom I am closely connected?"

"Very closely."

Davidoff slowly drew from his pocket the card on the back of which the painter had written his last farewell, and held it toward his patient. The latter, with something like terror, took the thin piece of pasteboard in his hand and read the name engraved upon it. A sudden flush mounted to his cheeks as he cried:

"Pierre! Pierre! Can this be possible?"

He remained speechless for a moment, his gaze fixed on the Russian doctor, who observed him in silence, motionless and sombre. Both were silent as if fearing to hear the sound of their own voices. They exchanged a glance

of horror and incredulity, so difficult was it for them to believe that this being, a short time since so full of life and vigor, should have vanished in a moment. Yet such was the fact. Pierre would never again appear amongst them. His place beside them was to be forever vacant.

Jacques without a word looked once more at the card, the name on which he had just read, and brushing away with the back of his hand the tears which filled his eyes, proceeded to read the last farewell addressed to him by his friend. He read aloud the lines traced in pencil with a trembling hand on the preceding night. His voice was choked by an overpowering emotion. He understood, from what he read, that his friend was weary of his suffering and his degradation, and that he desired to die in order to escape from them. But he saw also that in ending his life the thought had come to him to make this strange compact with fate, which should allow him to live again in Jacques. He read slowly aloud:

"I am going to try the experiment of which

Davidoff told us: I bequeath to you my soul. Live happy through me and for me."

A horrible hope lighted up the eyes of the sick man, at the same time that a sigh broke from his lips. He was overwhelmed with grief, but a vivifying faith had already taken root in his heart.

"It was I who saw him last," said the Russian doctor. "He left me to visit Clemence Villa. A violent scene, such as took place daily between them, must have occurred. He left the house, and after that no one knows what happened. Some coast-guards who chanced to be on the road to Vintimille during the night on the lookout for smugglers, with whom they exchanged shots, found the coat, the hat, and the card near the spot where the affray took place."

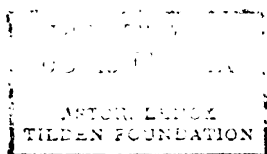
"And his body?" Jacques asked.

"The tide will doubtless wash it ashore later. It can then be buried in holy ground, and his friends can go shed their tears over his grave."

A deep groan, and the noise of a falling body in the parlor, were heard at the same mo-



**"JULIETTE WAS LYING UNCONSCIOUS ON THE FLOOR."**



ment. Jacques and the doctor started to their feet in terror. Davidoff went hastily forward, drew the blinds, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. At two steps from the window Juliette was lying unconscious on the floor. She had caught a chair to support herself with, which had fallen to the ground with her. Pale and with closed eyes, she looked as if she were dead.

The two men hurried into the house. At the noise Mme. de Vignes had appeared. She had no need to ask any questions. Through the open door she had seen her daughter. For this woman, apparently so frail, to take Juliette in her arms was the work of an instant. She laid her on the sofa, examined her countenance, placed her hand upon her heart, felt it beating, and, somewhat reassured, asked her son :

“What has happened?”

Davidoff approached the young girl and moistened her temples with water. Jacques did not give his mother the card on which was written the last will of his friend bequeath-

ing to him his soul. He only uttered the words:

“Pierre is dead.”

It seemed as if these words had power to make themselves heard by Juliette, even in her unconscious state. She sighed, opened her eyes, recognized those around her, and returning to life and to suffering at the same time, burst into tears.

Mme. de Vignes and her son exchanged glances. Jacques cast down his eyes. Then the mother, divining the secret of the virginal love of Juliette, uttered a deep sigh, and began to weep with her.

Davidoff took Jacques by the arm and led him out of the house. On the terrace the air was mild; the sun drew their fragrance from the odorous plants; the light breeze gladdened the heart; the sea was of a sapphire blue, the swallows skimmed along the surface of the water with joyful cries. It seemed to the doctor that his patient was no longer the same; he walked with a firm step, he held himself erect; his eyes, a moment before hollow and

dull, shone brightly. He did not speak, but from the animated expression of his face one could divine that a sudden exaltation had taken the place of his former dejection. Davidoff, with an expression of bitter irony, looked at him thus transformed by hope.

Then, as he thought of Pierre Laurier dead, and of Juliette weeping, the Russian smiled sardonically in silence. He thought that in order to restore this selfish young man to life the sacrifice of two human beings was a heavy price to pay, and he could fancy that he saw a pair of lovers, young and happy, walking arm in arm in the intoxicating perfume of the flowering orange-trees, on this beautiful terrace, under this cloudless sky. But the vision swiftly passed, and Davidoff saw only Jacques, revived already by the blood of Pierre and the tears of Juliette, walking by his side triumphantly.





### III.

**W**HILE he was swimming with all his strength toward the drowning man, Pierre, his figure brought into sharp relief by the light of the moon, at the moment unclouded, had been perceived by the custom-house officers, who were in ambush on the cliff. Two shots, passing close to him, a sharp whizzing sound in his ears, a dash of spray thrown up by the ball, told him that he had been taken for a smuggler. He raised himself on the crest of a wave and cast a rapid glance around. Ten yards away a black form was struggling in an eddy; two hundred yards farther off the boat, impelled by the efforts of the rowers, was making for the cutter, which tacked about in the open sea. A few vigorous strokes brought Pierre beside the wretch who was struggling desperately though almost unconsciously with the waves. Pierre grasped him vigorously, raised his head above the

water, and with all the force of his lungs gave a cry, which, borne from wave to wave, reached the boat. The man at the tiller raised himself up at this appeal, looked around attentively, and perceiving the two men struggling in the water in the moonlight, responded with a sharp whistle. Immediately the oars ceased to strike the surface of the water. The boat stopped, and the cutter, as if obeying orders previously received, headed toward the land. Weighed down by his human freight, and collecting all his strength, Pierre made slow progress. His clothes clinging to his body prevented the free movement of his limbs, and he could scarcely breathe. The waves now passed over his head. He no longer made an effort to swim. It seemed to him that an irresistible power drew him downward, and that invisible bonds weighed heavily upon his limbs. A buzzing sound filled his ears, and his darkened vision could no longer behold the sky. He thought to himself, "I shall never have the strength to reach the boat, and I am going to die along with this unfortunate wretch." He

was seized with despair at not being able to save this man, whom he had never seen before, and whom he held as closely clasped as if he had been a tenderly loved brother. He did not think of himself; he had resolved to die, and he felt a bitter joy in not sacrificing his life uselessly, by a foolish and cowardly suicide, but in the effort to rescue a fellow-being from death. An ardent desire to succeed restored to him his failing strength. He struggled forward with a more powerful effort with his inert burden, and once more rose to the surface. The boat was not more than twenty yards away. A choking cry escaped his lips, closed by the contraction of the muscles. He beat the water with his arm, while his paralyzed legs remained motionless. The breaking of a wave upon him turned him over, and the salt water filling his throat strangled a last cry. He sank into the green depths, the moon shining down upon him, with this idea clearly defined in his mind, that if he released his hold of his companion, lightened of the weight he would be saved.

But he rejected the selfish counsel of human weakness. He said to himself: "If I could save his life by the sacrifice of my own I would gladly do so. Courage, then; one last effort in order that he may not die with me." He rose to the surface of the water, gave a deep breath, saw once more the starry sky, and suddenly found himself released from the burden which was dragging him down. He heard voices saying in Italian, "Here he is; take hold of him." At the same moment a dark mass, which seemed to Pierre of enormous size, rose on the waves and fell heavily over upon him. He felt a sharp pain in the forehead. He seemed to see thousands of stars, then he lost consciousness. When he returned to himself he was stretched on a heap of sails in the forepart of a little vessel that swiftly cut the waters in the moonlight. The furled jib fluttered in the wind above his head. The waves roared, cut by the vessel's keel, and leaning over him were three men with swarthy faces who were anxiously awaiting his return to consciousness.



**"AND SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF RELEASED FROM THE BURDEN WHICH  
WAS DRAGGING HIM DOWN."**

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He tried to rise, but two arms held him down. One of the men, uncorking a wicker-covered flask, offered it to him to drink. He swallowed a mouthful of the strong brandy, which restored him fully to the consciousness of external things. A burning sensation in the forehead recalled to his mind the shock which had caused him to faint. He put his hand to his face and drew it away covered with blood. At the same time the night air, freshened by the rapid movement of the vessel, made him shiver, and he perceived that he was soaked to the skin. Then, in a voice which had not yet regained its strength, he said to the men who surrounded him :

"My friends, if you take an interest in my fate, as it would seem you do, in the first place give me some dry clothing, for I am dying of cold."

"Hold, our comrade is a countryman," said one of the three sailors with a strong Provençal accent. "Let me then have the privilege of placing my wardrobe at his disposal."

The speaker disappeared through the hatch-



way, and reappeared in a moment with a pair of trousers, a pair of shoes, a woolen shirt, and a heavy coat. He laid them down beside Pierre, and said with an air of satisfaction :

"Agostino will get over it; he begins to breathe again. Ah, if he was not struck by the prow of the boat as you were, he swallowed a great deal more water."

Pierre, at these words, recalled to mind the enormous black mass that he had seen towering above him on the waters the instant before he lost consciousness. He comprehended that it was the boat, rising on the crest of the wave, which had fallen with all its weight over upon him. While he was making these reflections, his companions quickly exchanged his wet garments for dry ones. He found himself at last seated on a coil of ropes, very dizzy, but experiencing a profound sense of comfort from the soft wool which communicated its warmth to his numbed limbs.

"Who is Agostino?" he asked, turning toward the three men, who were watching him with an air of satisfaction.

"Agostino," replied the Provençal, "is the comrade whom you rescued from the waves under the fire of the custom-house officers."

"And you yourselves," asked Pierre with brusque authoritativeness, "who are you?"

The sailors consulted together before answering. "There is no reason," said one of them in a guttural voice, in bad Italian, "why we should mistrust him. And any way what can he do to injure us?"

"Nothing at all," interrupted Pierre tranquilly. "And besides, even if I could injure you, I should certainly have no desire to do so."

"Ah, you understood what we were saying, then," cried the Provençal, laughing.

"Almost entirely, but it seemed to me a patois your comrades spoke."

"Yes, it is the Sardinian dialect. We are poor sailors trying to pass, free of duty, and at the risk of our lives, the goods intrusted to us by the merchants of Leghorn and Genoa."

"You are smugglers, then?"

"Well, yes! That is what they call us. We

were about to land some silks, brandy and cigars when we were interrupted, just in the midst of our work, by those dogs of custom-house officers. The goods were all passed on shore except two bales of Virginias, that fell into the sea for the fishes to smoke."

"But you, monsieur, how was it that you chanced to be on the spot, just in time, to get poor Agostino out of his fix?"

It was now Pierre's turn to be embarrassed. He did not think it necessary to confide to his hosts of a day the fatal project which had led him to the beach at the point in question, in order that he might there save another's life instead of throwing away his own. The delay he made in answering gave the sailors reason to think that he had his own motives for not giving an explanation of his conduct. However, they were not the men to be astonished at this, and were by habit disposed to be discreet.

"Your affairs concern no one but yourself," said the Provençal, just as the painter was beginning to invent an explanation of his pres-

ence on the scene, at the time mentioned, "and we have nothing to do with them. Instead of making you talk it would be better for us to staunch the wound in your forehead. It has bled, that is good for wounds in the head. All it wants now is a linen bandage, and in a couple of days there will be no need to think any more about it. Do you wish to come downstairs with the comrades?"

"If you do not mind, I should prefer to remain on deck. I am not very strong on my legs just yet and the air will do me good."

"As you choose."

A few moments later, Pierre, his head bound up, stood leaning against the side of the cutter, looking at the waves rolling past. Not a sail was in sight. In the distance a light shone through the mist, appearing and disappearing alternately. The young man inhaled with satisfaction the fresh sea-breeze. In the midst of these strangers he felt himself delivered from a crushing weight. It seemed to him that he was no longer the same person, and that the insane and sick Pierre Laurier slept

now at the bottom of the sea, his pale and lifeless form rocked by the waves. He breathed a profound sigh which vibrated through the silence, and murmured softly:

"It is true, I am dead."

"Do you need anything?" asked the Provençal, who had remained with him to attend to his wants.

"My faith, my dear comrade, since you smuggle cigars, you have doubtless a little store of them on board. I confess that it would give me pleasure to smoke one."

"That is easily done."

The sailor leaned over the hatchway, and spoke a few words. He soon returned with a package of cigars tied with yellow ribbons, which he handed to Pierre.

"It is the captain who sends them to you," he said, "and he charges me to tell you that Agostino has entirely recovered consciousness. Poor boy, if we had left him behind us at the bottom of the sea there would have been many a tear shed in Torrevecchio."

"Where is Torrevecchio?" asked Pierre.

The Provençal pointed toward the distant horizon.

"Down there," he said, "in Corsica."

He struck a light and handing the burning wood to Pierre,—

"Here is a light," he said.

Pierre chose a long, dark colored cigar, lighted it carefully, and taking a few quick puffs with keen delight,—

"Tell me," he said, "where is the vessel bound for now?"

The Provençal shook his head.

"No one but the captain knows that," he said. "We have rounded the point of the Island of Elba."

"But what port is the vessel bound for—Porto Ferraio or where?"

"That is what we shall know when we get there. We are in God's hands."

Pierre smiled and nodded his head approvingly. Walking slowly toward the heap of sails on which he had found himself lying when he returned to consciousness, he sat down upon it, drew his woolen coat around him,

lowered the hood over his head, leaned against a coil of rope for a pillow, and with his eyes fixed on the resplendent sky, smoking slowly, his mind tranquil, and his heart free, for the first time in many years, he lost himself in a reverie, which ended sweetly in sleep.

When he awoke the slanting rays of the sun, in which he was basking like a lizard in the crevice of a wall, fell warmly upon him. At first he could hardly remember where he was. The sails and rigging presented to his eyes a sight which they were not accustomed to see on opening in the morning. Suddenly the recollection of the events which had filled the short hours of the night came to his mind. His heart beat rapidly at the knowledge that his accustomed way of life was at an end, that nothing which he was accustomed to do was any longer possible to him. Between his past and his present yawned a gulf deeper than the blue sea which separated the vessel from the shore. And at the bottom a corpse, that of a mad painter, named Pierre Laurier, lay killed by a fatal fall.

Yes, killed! He repeated the word to himself that there might remain no possible doubt in his still confused mind on this point. He had announced his intention to kill himself; he had even written it to his friends. At this moment they must be plunged in astonishment or in sorrow. He could not reappear before them without danger of seeming ridiculous. Chance had placed him in the midst of new surroundings where he was absolutely unknown to his companions. All he had to do was to let himself drift along wherever chance might lead.

And then was it not silence, rest, peace that his spirit longed for? Ah, to emerge from the hell of a degrading intrigue, and find himself suddenly cast into the paradise of a primitive and altogether novel existence! To exchange the agitated atmosphere of a coquette's boudoir, the vitiated air of a gambling hall for the fresh and wholesome odors of this vessel cleaving the blue waters. His lungs expanded in the fresh breeze. It seemed to him that his chest broadened and a tremor of delight passed through his frame. He rose, and seeing the



crew assembled on deck, he went with a tranquil step toward his new friends.

The Provençal advanced to meet him.

"Have you slept well?" he asked.

"As never before!"

"Ah, the sea knows how to lull one to sleep!"

"Where are we?" asked Pierre.

"Abreast of Leghorn—that line of white coast which you see there to the left is Viareggio. But here comes the captain with Agostino, who wishes to thank you."

Hardly had Pierre time to turn round when a young man of about twenty, with brown hair and beard, an olive complexion, lighted up by large eyes, and a kindly smile, rushed to him and clasped him in his arms.

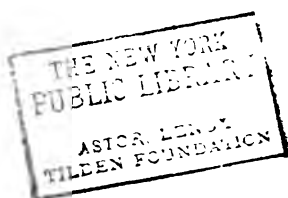
"It is you who saved my life!" he cried, with a strong Italian accent. "You may count on me in your turn: my life belongs to you."

"Well, well! comrade," answered the painter, gently disengaging himself.

He looked at Agostino, and placing his hand on his shoulder:



**'A YOUNG MAN OF ABOUT TWENTY . . . . RUSHED TO HIM AND  
CLASPED HIM IN HIS ARMS.'**



"You were indeed too young to die," he said. "But it is your companions who saved you; as for me, I was drowning with you."

"That is precisely what makes me grateful to you," said Agostino. "You were sinking, yet you did not leave me to the mercy of the waters. Oh, you must come to our village so that my mother and sister may thank you. But what is your name?"

"Pierre."

In his turn Agostino examined his preserver.

"You are neither a fisherman, a sailor, nor a workman—you are a gentleman," he said.

"Indeed, you are mistaken. I am a workman,—I am a painter."

"Ah, you paint pictures, then? Faces of men and women perhaps, looking out of windows in villas, or perhaps signs for shops. Perhaps Madonnas at the corners of the streets."

"Precisely," said Pierre. "And if I could find work to do in your country I would settle down there for a time."

"The Corsicans are not rich," said the cap-

tain; "but if you want to give a dash of paint to Saint Laurent there, at the stern of the vessel—"

"Certainly, when we arrive in port. It shall be the price of my passage, if you do not think it too little."

"It is we who are your debtors," interrupted the smugglers. "Whatever you do to the vessel, we shall take as a mark of friendship; but as for ourselves we shall still be in your debt."

"It is settled then," cried Pierre gayly. "And might one know where we are going at this pretty rate?"

"To Bastia."

"Be it Bastia, then," said the painter. "I have no choice, and provided we do not make the mainland, I shall be satisfied."

"Are you obliged to try change of climate, then? Does not the air of France agree with you?" asked the captain with an inquisitive smile.

"Not at all."

"Have you got yourself into some scrape?"

"A very bad scrape Yes! a love affair."

A scornful expression crossed the smuggler's face, and Pierre could see that he had fallen in his estimation. But although he had succeeded in making himself out culpable only, not criminal, he already felt himself more at his ease with his companions. "Here I am," he said to himself, "like Salvator Rosa among the brigands. But is the occupation of the men who surround me any worse than that of the people to whom I give my hand every day? The only difference is in station and in dress. Only that these are more open to generosity and gratitude than my former friends. These are more simple and upright by nature, than the others. These bad fellows, who have all perhaps done something to deserve imprisonment, even the galleys, it may be, are less corrupt, less thoroughly evil, than those with whom I associate habitually."

This bitter philosophy strengthened him, and he faced with tranquillity, almost with satisfaction, his new situation. He no longer thought of dying. He no longer had any reason to curse life. It provided him with novel

sensations which excited his active imagination. Capricious and impressionable, as easily exalted as depressed, his artistic temperament made him form in an instant the most flattering expectations which replaced all his former anxieties. This change of environment made him feel, not embarrassment nor annoyance, but contentment and tranquillity. It seemed to him as if he had just escaped from a prison in which for long months he had dragged out a weary existence. He rejoiced in his independence, his freedom. His vision, refreshed and sharpened, as it were, was struck by a thousand details which had passed unnoticed before. The green tint of the waves, fringed with silver foam, charmed his sight. He studied the gradations of color in the sky, of an intense blue at the zenith and of an opal-like gray at the horizon. The slender masts of the vessel, the rigging, the red sails defined against the clear background, the profile of a sailor seated on the bowsprit, making fast a rope, these *tableaux vivants*, arranged without premeditation, attracted his attention, and af-

forded him delightful enjoyment. Scarcely was he released from the bondage of the woman who had held him in her toils, than he recovered his love for his art, and with extraordinary fickleness, he retained only a vague recollection, dimmed as if by distance, of her who had been his torment. His degrading passion had been dislodged from his heart, by the violent moral shock he had sustained, as a rotten fruit falls from the bough after a storm.

He lighted one of the long Virginias which the Provençal had given him the night before, and leaning his elbow on the rail of the vessel he let his gaze wander over the calm sea, to which animation was lent by the fishing vessels moving slowly, and the steamers more rapidly, and leaving in their wake a trail of black smoke, on their way to Civita Vecchia or Naples. The wind filling the sails impelled the cutter swiftly on, and already in the mists in the distance could be seen the tall and purple mountains bathed in the warm sunshine.

Pierre called Agostino, and pointing to the



horizon, "What is that country before us," he asked.

"Corsica," said the sailor, in his guttural voice. "Those mountains over there stretch from the point of Centuri to Bonifacio. The little island close to the mainland on the left is Giraghia. To-night we shall pass between her batteries and Cape Corso to reach Bastia. If it were not for the sea-mist you could see the snow on Mount Calvo; but you shall see for yourself what a fine country it is. And there is no monopoly of tobacco there, the trade is free, not as in France, though its being illegal does not prevent its being carried on there all the same. But breakfast is ready. You must be hungry."

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, then, come along with me."

In the fore-part of the vessel, on some empty casks, a very simple repast was spread—bread, ham, a Gorgonzola cheese, some apples, and some bottles of white wine.

"Sit down, sir," said the captain, pointing out to Pierre a place beside him; "and help yourself."

The cheer was appetizing, and the painter did honor to it. While he ate, he observed that his companions remained silent.

"Is it on my account you are silent?" he asked suddenly. "I should be sorry if it were."

The captain looked at him tranquilly.

"No," he said, "but we are always together, and we have little news to tell each other. And then the sea prevents one talking much. It talks always. It is a great babbler, and the sailor listens to it."

The others nodded approvingly. Then Pierre, pouring some wine into his tin cup, raised it and said:

"To your health, my friends."

They all raised their cups and gravely repeated:

"To your health."

And after they had drunk some boiling hot coffee and some excellent rum, without wasting any more time at table they rose and each one set about his work. The day passed with incredible swiftness, and in the evening the

cutter entered the port of Bastia. On the following morning, the Board of Health having given permission, the crew of the little vessel made ready to land. Agostino, following Pierre, made him sit beside him in the fore-part of the boat. It seemed as if he wished to play the part of host and make him welcome to his country. He pointed out to him the various places of interest of the town: the Place St. Nicolas, which overlooks the sea; the Boulevard de la Traverse, a rich and populous quarter, the convent of Saint Roch on the heights, the citadel, and the ruins of the ancient donjons, destroyed by the cannons and by fire, during the wars against the Genoese. Framing in this amphitheatre of houses extending from the sea-shore half-way up the mountain, were gardens, green and flourishing, where the orange-trees and mimosas shed around their exquisite perfumes. Above the town the brushwood, the short and dry vegetation which covers the sides of all the mountains of Corsica and constitutes what is called *le maquis*—broom, heather, junipers, mastic,

and small fir-trees, that, finding on the rock hardly sufficient earth for their roots to cling to offer an asylum which is almost impenetrable to game and to bandits. On the summits of the mountains are fine groves of beech-trees, the wealth of the country, plundered by the peasants, and destroyed by the shepherds, who burn them to make pasture land.

All this Agostino told his preserver while the boat sailed by the mole of the Dragon on its way to the quay.

Arrived at the foot of the steps they disembarked, and Pierre, a little dizzy, found himself once more on terra firma. He still wore his coat, his coarse woolen trousers and his coarse shoes. He had left behind his other clothing, ruined by the salt water, and brought with him only his money and his watch. On the quay he looked at himself in the window of a tavern, and with the bandage covering his forehead, he fancied he had the air of a genuine brigand. He seized Agostino by the arm and stopped him.

"Where are we going at such a rate?" he said.

"To breakfast, in the first place," said the young man, "and then to our village. We have a week's holiday while we are waiting for other goods."

"Well then, come, breakfast with me. Afterward you will show me the way to an inn."

"Wont you come with me to our village?" said Agostino in a trembling voice. "I had promised myself to make my mother kiss you."

"I would go with you very willingly," said Pierre, laughing; "but have you forgotten that I promised the captain to repaint his Saint Laurent for him. What is promised must be done."

"You are right," said Agostino gayly. "But how long will it take you to do the work."

"The whole of to-morrow morning."

"So that to-morrow evening you will be ready to accompany me."

"Yes, certainly."

"Then I will wait for you. Meantime I shall go and engage the carriage of Father Anton. In that way you will make the journey more comfortably."

"Very well, it is settled then."

They soon reached the inn of Santa Maria, where Agostino was held in high favor on account of the excellent viands, smuggled from Greece and Italy, which he brought there every month.

Installed in a room on the ground floor, Pierre was able, for the first time in three days, to examine his situation and reflect upon his future course. On the one hand he experienced a profound disgust at the thought of returning to France. On the other he was loath to cause annoyance to Agostino. Everything, then, conspired to keep him where he was, and then the charm of this wonderful country exercised its spell over him. Everything around him allured him—the scenery, savage and attractive at the same time, the curious customs of the people, and, finally, the fact of his being unknown, which allowed him to live at his ease among the peasantry, so interesting a subject for study in this country where the beggars have the haughty airs of grand seigneurs. All that Merimée had writ-

ten about it recurred to his mind—the poetic figure of the wild Colombe, the ferocious hatred of the Baricini; and it seemed as if time had gone back two centuries, in this island, divided now as of old by the animosities of its rival parties, and agitated by the sanguinary memories of vendettas.

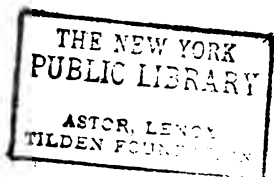
He spent the afternoon wandering through the streets of the town alone, for Agostino, with great discretion, had left him to himself. He did not feel a moment's ennui. The coming and going of the inhabitants, grave and reserved, the picturesque dress of the peasants who had come in to market, almost all armed with guns, the sombre garments of the women with their black mezzaro headdresses looking as if they were all in mourning, enchanted him.

He entered a tailor's shop and bought a complete suit of brown velvet, resembling the costume of a Calabrian brigand, for he could not decently continue to wear his coat, his sailor trousers and his coarse shoes. At a paint shop in La Traverse he bought a box of



**"WHILE HE WAS PAINTING THE RUDE IMAGE OF CARVED WOOD THE TWO SAILORS,  
SUPPORTING THEMSELVES BY THE RIGGING, WATCHED HIM ADMIRINGLY."**





paints and some brushes of various sizes. And his mind now at rest as to the manner in which he should employ his time in the native land of Bonaparte, he retraced his steps to the inn. He dined with Agostino, made the tour of the town afterward, went to bed at nine o'clock and slept a dreamless sleep.

The sunshine streaming into his window awoke him. He jumped out of bed, and dressed himself. Then, taking his box under his arm, he set out for the cutter. A boat, for a few sous, transported him to the little vessel, moored fast by its two anchors, and at the side of which a rude plank, attached by two cords to the bowsprit, formed a sort of swing in front of the image of the Saint—the patron of the vessel.

Guided by the captain and assisted to his place by the crew, Pierre at once set himself to his work. While he was painting the rude image of carved wood, the two sailors supporting themselves by the rigging watched him admiringly.

Under his touch the colors glowed, the face

assumed a lifelike expression, and the extended arm seemed to command the waves. At ten, the work being completed, Pierre, regarded by them all with a new feeling of respect inspired by his skill, breakfasted for the last time with his companions of a day.

Toward midday he left the vessel, accompanied by all the crew, and after shaking hands with those to whom he owed more than life, he mounted with Agostino a sort of curricule, drawn by a shaggy horse, and starting off at a quick pace they soon left Bastia behind them.

From the town hall of the village the road winds through enclosures planted with vines, along olive groves and among little woods of eucalyptus and green oaks. The soil is sandy and the climate extremely mild. Streams, descending from the mountains, spread themselves through the earth, forming marshes covered with rose bushes, and broad green meadow-land over which fly flocks of ducks and wild geese. The road winds for half of the way along the beach, passing through infrequent villages. Agostino, urging his horse to a gallop, explained

to his companion the habits and customs of the country, expressing himself with an effusion and gayety that contrasted strongly with the gravity he had shown on board. He seemed like a school boy enjoying his vacation.

"You shall see how rich our country is," he said. "We are not lazy keepers of flocks. At Torrevicchio there is trade! My father sold his own wine, and our vineyard is of some value. My brother-in-law cultivates it at present and sells the produce. My mother and youngest sister live in a village, where they raise vegetables for the market of the neighboring town, and I let them want for nothing. Ah, they will love you dearly when they know what you have done for me!"

The painter smiled as he thought of the grateful affection of these poor people. "I shall not be a restraint upon them for long," he thought. "I will soon get away. After a day spent in the village a guide can conduct me across the mountain, for I do not care to remain by the sea-coast, in the low country. I want to see the Corsican in his rude state—

the *maquis* and the brigands. If there are sketches to be made they must be taken in the neighborhood of Bocognano, the holy land of the vendetta. I have twenty louis in my pocket-book, and in my portfolio a note of a thousand francs saved from the waves. That is more than I need to live a couple of months on in this primitive country in the midst of these people who have no wants. And when I have no more money I shall have my profession. I shall paint portraits, for a hundred sous a sitting—that will take me back to my youth.”

The carriage, having crossed the bridge of San Pancrazio, rolled along the precipitous road between rows of century-old chestnuts. The sun was sinking below the horizon, reddening the mountain with his last rays. Agostino turned into a little path, along which he drove, whistling gayly, like the blackbirds of his country. At the end of a few hundred yards he stopped before the wall of an enclosed piece of land, and jumped to the ground. A large dog, which had appeared at

the sound, barking with a ferocious air, rushed between the young man's legs, now barking joyfully. An old woman and a little girl made their appearance in the orchard, and ran to him with open arms. Agostino embraced them with effusion, and then pushed them toward his preserver, telling them of his adventure, in the Corsican patois, with incredible volubility. Pierre, received with open arms by these good people, overwhelmed with their gratitude, drawn into the whirlwind of their extravagant joy, licked by the dog, embraced by the mother and the children, soon found himself installed in the house, a very modest one, but exquisitely clean, seated at the family table, and experiencing a feeling of tranquil satisfaction to which he had been a stranger for many months.

He retired early, thanking his hosts for their hospitality, rose late on the following morning, visited the surroundings of the house, made the acquaintance of the brother-in-law of Agostino, who was a great hunter, and his sister, who was a notable housewife, played with the little

Marietta, who ever since the evening before had been watching him with her piercing black eyes, disclosing her white teeth in a smile, but showing rustic timidity whenever she approached him.

Night came with surprising rapidity, without Pierre's having done anything more than live. Alone in his room, stretched on the fresh corn mattress, he smiled at himself.

"Here I am leading the innocent life of a shepherd," he said, "and resolved to become a new man, morally and mentally. What would my companions and friends say if they could see me indulging in these idyllic dreams? They would say that the Madonna, in whom every one here believes so firmly, has visibly protected me. Pierre Laurier, my boy, you were on a bad road. By a miracle, you have been led into safety. Profit by the favor that Providence has shown you, enjoy the years that are left you, and turn them to account, working untrammelled, a thing that up to the present you have had little chance of doing. You

have been better treated than you deserve. Be thankful for it."

He fell asleep in the midst of these sage reflections, and dreamed that he was painting a picture in which the evil genius had the fascinating and satanic features of Clemence Villa, and the good genius the angelic ones of Juliette de Vignes. Then on the canvas appeared the image of Jacques, with his blonde locks and his melancholy eyes. Clemence approached the sick man, and speaking to him with animation, in a low voice, drew him toward her slowly, encircling him with her arms. The young man grew paler, his glance became more melancholy, his lips more pallid than before. Then the gaze of the painter wandered to Juliette, and he saw that she was oppressed with a mortal sadness. Her hands were joined together in the attitude of prayer, and it was not for her brother alone she prayed. Another name also was on her lips, and Pierre divined that it was his. He would then have rushed to her to reassure and console her, but the arm of Jacques was interposed to



prevent him, and these words fell from his lips:

"You have bequeathed to me your soul. You belong no longer to yourself. You have not the right to return to life."

Then Pierre stopped, and gradually the picture vanished from his gaze, and he saw only the little Marietta with her black locks flying wildly, who, in the pastures shaded by ancient chestnut trees, watched her goats. The night passed in these troubled dreams, but when he awoke Pierre recovered his calmness and set out for the chase with Agostino and his brother-in-law. The days passed, and at the end of the week the sailor informed him that he must return to his vessel. He was to be away for three weeks, and counted on finding his preserver here on his return.

Pierre was already at home in the family of Agostino. These humble peasants showed for him a sincere affection, such as he had not often met with. As he was not more than half inclined to leave them he allowed himself to be persuaded to remain to paint the por-

trait of the little goat-keeper, and in these peaceful surroundings, in the midst of the luxuriance of nature, his recovered inspiration blossomed with a new grace and power. He worked every day until four o'clock, and in the evening he joined the family circle, which was increased by the brother-in-law, who came after dinner every day with his wife.

The mayor of Torrevecchio, a violent Bonapartist, having learned that a painter was staying in the village, had ventured, accompanied by the curé of the parish, to go and request Pierre to restore the paintings on the walls of the church, which were the work of an Italian master and which were interesting, dating from the Genoese occupation of the country. Laurier had accepted the task, and not content with retouching the defaced portions of the mural paintings of the little church, had undertaken the decoration of the chapel of the Virgin recently constructed. Absorbed in his work, amusing himself with hunting and fishing, without a moment to spare, he had returned so completely to his old

self that he now never thought of the past. It would have made him blush with shame if any one had reminded him that one summer night, when the breeze was laden with fragrance, and the soft murmur of the sea and the splendor of the heavens bore witness to the harmony that reigned in the universe, a certain Pierre Laurier had contemplated killing himself, for the wicked eyes of a woman who made his life miserable. He would have shrugged his shoulders, lighted his pipe, and declared that there was only one thing in the world worth striving for—to get the values in a figure in the open air. And he looked over the top of his palette through his half-closed eyes at little Marietta, who, seated on a chestnut-log in the garden, her feet resting on the green grass, her dog beside her, was posing for him, proud to be his model.

Agostino came back from his trip to Leghorn, but went away again a few days later. Pierre seemed to have accommodated himself to his new life and talked no more of leaving the country. He had sought at Bastia some



**“ HE LOOKED OVER THE TOP OF HIS PALETTE THROUGH HIS HALF-CLOSED  
EYES AT LITTLE MARIETTA.”**

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necessary articles of furniture for the house, the arrival of which aroused the liveliest curiosity among the villagers. They could readily distinguish the difference of station between the painter and his hosts. The mayor and the curé had both declared that Pierre was a superior man. His manners showed him to be city-bred. His generosity would seem to indicate that he was rich. Who was he? Pierre was evidently only a Christian name. Was he trying to conceal his identity? And if so, why?

The mayor, piqued by curiosity, proceeded quietly to investigate the matter. The prefect of Ajaccio had already received a message from the sub-prefect of Bastia, to the effect that a mysterious visitor from the mainland lived in the house of a humble family of Tor-revecchio, that he painted wonderful pictures on the walls of the church, and that although everything about him indicated him to be perfectly honorable, it would yet be interesting to find out who he was. The authorities, however, were less ceremonious. They simply

sent a gen-d'arme to ask the stranger for his passport. Fortunately the gen-d'arme took it into his head to stop at the mayor's office on his way in order to tell the mayor the object of his mission. The latter seeing that his intrigues were about to lead to an unjustifiable intrusion of the police on the privacy of one for whom he entertained particular consideration, took the gen-d'arme, who was not to blame in the matter, to task about it, and sent him back to town with a letter for the prefect, thus sparing Pierre, who was quietly pursuing his work, suspecting nothing, a visit from the police. So that after all, Pierre's identity remained undiscovered.

Pierre had now been about two months at Torrecchio, hunting, fishing and painting, and he had finished, not only the portrait of Marietta and the painting in the church, but also two genre pictures, when one day, during his absence on a visit to the silver mines of Cabor, a carriage coming from Bastia deposited at the inn of Torrecchio two travelers, accompanied by their servants, who called for

breakfast. The innkeeper, being asked as to what there was of interest to be seen in the country, mentioned the paintings of the church, and the younger of the travelers, whom his companion called "Doctor," went to look at them.

Pausing before a picture of the Resurrection, which at once attracted his attention, he examined it with profound attention, and seeing the curé crossing the nave of the church, he said to him :

"You have here, Monsieur le Curé, a very valuable work, by a French artist, evidently, for the artist who painted this is assuredly not an Italian."

"You are right, Monsieur," said the priest, "he is a Frenchman."

"What is his name?"

"I do not know."

"Ah," said the doctor, "it is not known who the artist is, then."

"But he lives in the village," replied the curé, "and—"

A look of surprise crossed the doctor's face and he said quickly :



"He has lived here about two months, is it not so?"

The traveler, reflecting for a moment, said to himself in a low voice:

"Can it be possible?" Then aloud:

"Do you know even his Christian name?"

"Yes, Monsieur, he is called Pierre."

"And he has chestnut hair, blue eyes, a blonde mustache, and is of medium height," said the traveler quickly.

"A blonde mustache? No," said the priest, "but his eyes are blue, and he is not above medium height."

"It is he, it must be he," cried the doctor. "And then there is no one but himself who could paint this Resurrection."

"You know this young man, then?" said the priest. "Ah, if you would be so good as to inform us—"

"Who he is? I cannot do that, since it is his wish to remain unknown. But I may at least tell you that the artist who has done these paintings for you is one of the most promising of the younger painters of the

French school—But I must see him; where is he?"

"He is away for a few days."

"Away? And we are going to-morrow! No matter. I must leave a sign of my presence here for him."

He took a pencil from his pocket-book, and proceeded to write on the whitewashed wall, first saying to the priest:

"Will you permit me, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Go on," answered the latter.

Then the stranger wrote these words below the "Resurrection" painted by Pierre:

"Et idem resurrexit Petrus," and underneath, "Davidoff."

Then turning to the curé, "When he returns," he said, "show him these words. He will know what they mean."

He then took leave of the priest, and returning to the inn, said to his companion:

"My dear Count, you made a mistake in not coming out with me: you have missed something very curious."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you when we are on board. While we are here it must be a secret."

The two travelers then lighted their cigars, entered the carriage, and proceeded on their way.

The next day but one, Pierre returned from his expedition with the brother-in-law of Agostino, bringing with him a pair of pretty silver earrings for Marietta and a buckle for her mother. He breakfasted early, and was proceeding to work, when the curé, pushing open the glass door of the parlor, entered.

"Ah, Monsieur le Curé!" cried Pierre. "To what are we indebted for this pleasure?"

"A message with which I have been intrusted for you."

"Ah! And by whom?"

"A stranger."

Pierre's forehead clouded, and in a voice that trembled slightly, he said:

"Let me hear what it is."

"If you will accompany me to the church," said the priest, "you will learn it more quickly and more fully than I could tell you."

"I am at your orders."

He took his hat and went out with the priest.

For some time they walked on in silence. As they were nearing the great square the curé said :

"A stranger has been looking at your painting, and he has assured me that you have enriched our church with a picture of great value."

Pierre did not answer. He nodded without speaking and hastened his steps as if eager to learn what was awaiting him.

He crossed the nave of the church, stopped before his "Resurrection," and with an emotion which he could not conceal read the Latin inscription on the wall: "Et idem resurrexit Petrus—Davidoff." He heaved a sigh, repeated in a choking voice, "Davidoff," and then relapsed into silence.

The curé, translating the Latin phrase, said behind him :

"'And in the same way, Pierre has arisen from the dead.' Then a miracle has been

wrought for you? My dear child, we must praise the mercy of God."

Pierre passed his hand over his forehead, smiled at the priest, who regarded him with astonishment, and in a grave voice said:

"Yes, a miracle has been wrought for me, and God be praised for it."

He relapsed once more into silent meditation as if he were recalling the past. Then he said softly:

"Monsieur le Curé, I thank you for having taken this trouble. What you have told me has a profound interest for me. *Au revoir* Monsieur le Curé."

And with a slow step and eyes bent upon the ground, he returned to the house of Agostino's mother.

On the following day one of the acolytes brought him a letter which had been posted at Ajaccio, bearing this address:

"*Monsieur Pierre, care of Monsieur le Curé de Torrevicchio.*"

He opened the letter with emotion. It contained these lines:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: You are still among the living; a more agreeable surprise could not have awaited me. It was I who performed the painful task of taking to Beaulieu the note in which you announced your fatal resolution, which happily was not carried out. He to whom you bequeathed your soul, whether by a miracle or through the power of imagination, suddenly felt a renewal of life and is now almost restored to health. But one who is closely connected with him came near losing her life in consequence of the news of your death. In the depths of your retreat, know that you passed close to happiness without perceiving it, but that it is still in your power to obtain it.

"Your sincere friend,

"DAVIDOFF."

Having read the letter, Pierre folded it, put it into his pocket and left the house. He walked thoughtfully along the road to Bastia, pausing when he reached the shore. The calm blue sea sparkled in the sunshine, far as the eye could reach. The vessels in the distance, their sails shining in the sunlight, glided along so slowly as to seem almost motionless.

The young man sat down on a rock, and, as on the evening when he had contemplated suicide, he fell into a revery. Slowly the image of Jacques rose before him, his face no longer pale and gloomy, but radiant with health and youth. He walked with buoyant step on the verdant terrace of the house at Beaulieu. All nature had awakened at the balmy breath of spring, and Jacques, like the plants and the flowers, seemed animated with new life. Suddenly Juliette appeared beside him, and now it was she who was ill and sad. Under her beautiful eyes were black rings, her cheeks were hollow, and in her smile there was the heart-rending sweetness of a last farewell.

A shudder passed through Pierre. It seemed to him as if the gaze of the young girl, fixed upon the sea, sought vainly in its blue waters for something that was not there. He saw this girl whose affection, reciprocated for a moment, he had afterward disdained, dying slowly of grief for his loss. He heard a voice murmur beside him: "It is you who are the cause of her tears, of her suffering, of her lan-

guor. You have just heard it—she is dying because she believes that you are dead. You had but to utter a word, and this innocent heart, filled with your image, would have opened to receive you. You had happiness and peace in your grasp but you flung them recklessly away. Why delay longer in trying to regain them? Will you let her whom you love perish? You have only to go to her and she will revive again. Come, begin life anew. The future is yours, since you are loved.”

He heaved a sigh and tears sprang to his eyes—the first he had shed since the tears of rage and shame of which Clemence Villa had been the cause. But he did not long give way to his emotion. He wished to examine his own heart, and judge himself with impartial severity. Was he purified and regenerated by this voluntary withdrawal from all he had held dear? Did he feel himself capable of leading a new life? If temptation came in his way would he have the strength to resist it? He trembled. A pale, dark face with gleaming eyes rose before him. From its lips came a



sardonic burst of laughter as on the night when he had resolved to end his life. What was she laughing at, showing her white teeth and the dimples at the corners of her mouth? Was it at him? Was she then so sure of her power to bring him to her feet, the day she should take it into her head to do so? Was he, then, her slave?

He feared so;—his weakness had been so great, his follies so disastrous, his cowardice so complete, his fall so low. At the thought of again coming into the toils of this cruel and heartless woman a cold sweat broke out upon his forehead and his heart beat with anguish. He fancied if he saw death before him a second time he would again choose it in preference to such humiliation. He dropped his head between his hands dejectedly, and, gazing at the sea which was now reddened by the splendors of the sunset, surrounded by the peace and the grandeur of nature, he fell into a reverie.

Gradually his thoughts grew clearer, and he, who had not prayed since his childhood, seeing

himself so solitary, so sad, and so forsaken, raised his eyes to heaven in prayer. He asked nothing for himself. However hard and wretched his own lot might be, he accepted it without a murmur. But this pure and gentle creature, was she not innocent of blame, and did she not deserve to be spared from suffering. For her he implored hope and peace. Since he had the happiness to be loved by her, let her at least be endowed with the strength to live until his heart should be washed free from its stains. Could Divine Justice refuse her this peace? In the midst of the solitude surrounding him he allowed himself to utter a few words of prayer.

Suddenly his attention was arrested by an occurrence which symbolized in an instant his fears and hopes.

From a point of rock jutting out into the sea at his feet a dove had just flown in terror. An eagle followed close behind trying to capture her. She made desperate efforts to escape, but the bird of prey gained upon her steadily, uttering a shrill cry at every stroke of

his powerful wings. Pierre, struck by the sight, said to himself, "Let this be a sign. If the eagle captures his prey, all is over with Juliette and me. If the dove succeeds in escaping, then I may hope to appear before her again, worthy of happiness."

From the moment in which he thus succinctly formulated the problem of his destiny Pierre, in breathless suspense, followed with his eyes the conflict between the two birds. The eagle had lowered his flight, and was now close to the dove and almost directly above her, menacing her with his sharp beak and livid claws. Terrified, the poor bird directed its flight toward a clump of oaks, hoping to take refuge there. But her ferocious enemy, divining her intention, hastened his flight toward her. Pierre, his heart oppressed, his hands trembling, longed to give some of his strength to the dove: he saw the moment approach in which she must succumb to her pursuer. Just as the rapacious bird was about to seize his victim, a shot was heard. The eagle turned over in the air mortally wounded, and fell to

the ground, and the dove, saved from his clutches, disappeared among the trees.

Pierre uttered a cry of joy. The response to his question had been decisive and immediate. Destiny had interposed in his favor in an undeniable manner. The invisible marksman whose intervention had thus settled the question, had he not been guided to the spot in order to put an end to Pierre's anguish? But by a sudden return of his former mocking humor he began to laugh at the thought that a shot fired at a bird should thus be the arbiter of his fate. He shook his head.

"Work, that is the true panacea," he said. "The day I abandoned it, I was lost. I have returned to it, it will save me."

The sun sank into the sea, red as fire. Pierre rose and returned to the village with a more tranquil heart.



#### IV.

**I**T was the first Sunday of the Carnival, and the Casino at Nice, splendidly illuminated, was thrown open for the grand *veglione*. In the Place Masséna a crowd of curious spectators were watching the masqueraders entering the building, grouped around the burlesque throne on which King Carnival, in his spangled robes, had been sitting solemnly for two days past, the sceptre of Folly in his hand. The strains of the band filled the air, and the gay measures of waltz and quadrille, drowned by the buzzing of the crowd that ceaselessly surged through the vast edifice given up to fun and frolic, could be heard in bursts from time to time.

From the outside the scene looked like a gay parterre. A crowd of elegantly dressed figures, some with masks and some without, and all wearing dominos, of various colors, passed back and forth in the great hall, with

bursts of laughter and lively repartee. In the room where the orchestra was stationed, dancing was going on, in the boxes conversation and intrigue. All the lovely and seductive women of Monaco, Nice, and Cannes were here assembled to delight the eye.

In a corner of the room, leaning against the wall, Prince Patrizzi stood chatting and watching the coming and going of the dominos as they passed through the hall. With the help of the gay friends who surrounded him, he amused himself in guessing the names of the women who participated in the gayeties of the night under cover of their masks. He had already succeeded in guessing several, when suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprise:

"Why, there is Jacques de Vignes!" he cried.

It was indeed Jacques, animated and erect, his complexion fresh, his eyes clear. His blue domino floated behind him, giving him the air of a gallant cavalier of the Renaissance. He came forward to meet them half-way, his hand

extended, smiling and happy, as he had been before his illness; not haggard and weary looking, as he was on the evening, some months before, on which Dr. Davidoff had related his fantastic stories after a gay dinner. The transformation was complete. Triumphant, almost insolent, he seemed in the splendor of his youth and health so miraculously regained.

"You are entirely recovered, Jacques?" asked the Prince.

"Entirely," said the young man, "as you see."

"All honor be to the climate that has restored you to yourself and to us, for you were a jolly fellow, and you will be one again."

The young man leaned against the column beside Patrizzi, and letting his eyes wander over the motley crowd, that streamed by noisily,—

"And I enjoy life, my dear Prince," he said with ardor, "like a man who knows what it is to have almost lost it. You have never been seriously ill; you do not know the melancholy languor that takes possession of the spirit as the strength of the body decreases. It seems



as if a black veil covered all nature, so sombre and desolate does everything appear. The moments in which one might be happy are poisoned by the thought that they may perhaps be the last we shall enjoy, and the more beautiful and peaceful one's surroundings are the more does one execrate them. You may believe what I say, for I have experienced it. There can be nothing more cruel or more melancholy. So that now, after the hell through which I have passed, I am in paradise. Everything pleases, captivates, enchants me. I have learned the value of happiness, and I know how to enjoy it. The sun seems to me milder, the flowers more fragrant, the women more charming than before. I was on the brink of the grave, and thence springs my love for life."

"That's right," said Patrizzi; "it is pleasant to hear you. But your recovery is truly miraculous. Now that I come to think of it—what wonderful story is that we heard about it? Did not some one make you a present of a new soul? Davidoff pretends that it is not you who are alive, but your friend Laurier, and he

adds that you are very lucky in the change, for Pierre was of the stuff that centenarians are made of."

The Prince gave a burst of laughter which made Jacques turn pale, and called the moisture to his brow.

"I beg of you," said the young man, "not to speak of that again; it is very painful to me. Laurier was the friend of my childhood, and his loss will be long and deeply felt by me. If the case had been reversed and it were I who had given my life to him, the world would have gained by the change, for Pierre was an artist of indubitable genius, and I shall never be worth anything."

As he uttered these words, feverishly and in a trembling voice, Jacques's pallor increased. His gaze was clouded, and his features suddenly seemed to contract, giving greater prominence to the cheek-bones and the teeth.

He was seized with a sort of trembling as if he had a fever. He bit his lips, which had become livid, and tried to smile. But for a moment, as if in a vision of death, he presented

to his friends, instead of his former healthy and happy look, the ghastly appearance of a dying man.

A moment later the blood returned to his cheeks, his look brightened, and Jacques was once more what he had been before, brilliant and haughty. He seemed to wish to shake off a painful impression, and taking a turn in the room he cried, with a gayety that was somewhat forced:

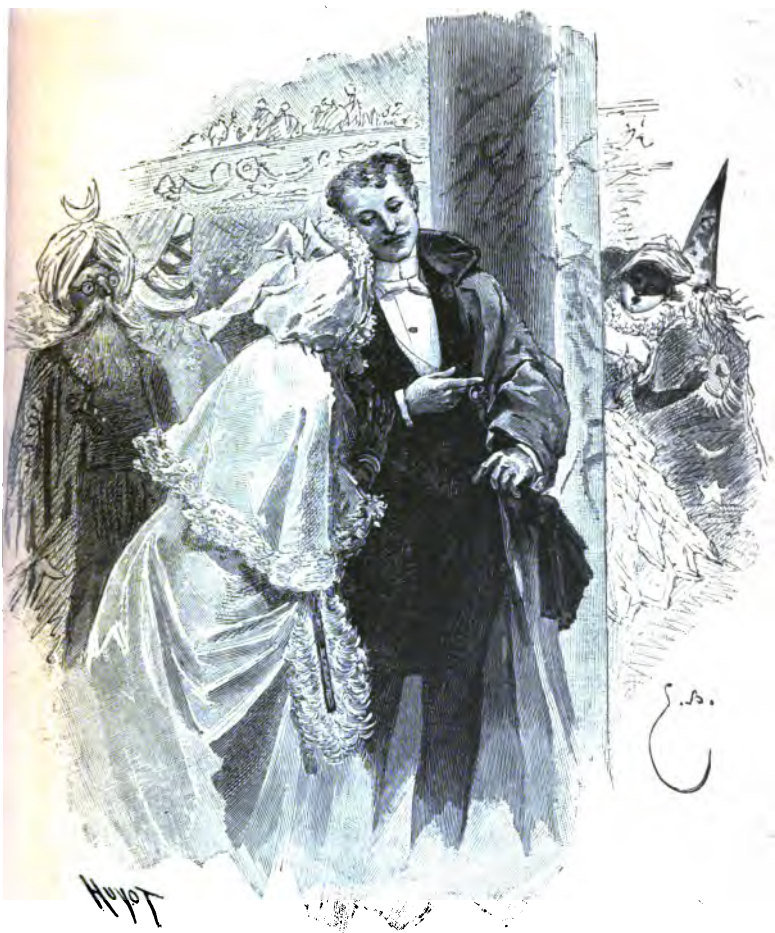
"What a lovely evening, made indeed for pleasure! In the street all is noise and gayety, and here everything is lovely and seductive."

As he ceased speaking, a white domino, emerging from a group, approached him, and said in a disguised voice:

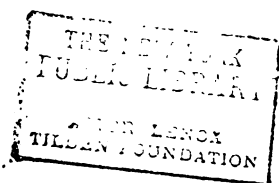
"Lovely and seductive? Let us see if your acts will accord with your words."

Through her mask, the domino fixed upon Jacques a brilliant glance. The young man felt a supple arm slip through his own, and he asked gayly:

"Are you in the humor for an adventure? Well, then, capture me and I will be your



"ARE YOU IN THE HUMOR FOR AN ADVENTURE?"



slave; the one will no doubt be as easy as the other."

The domino gave him a gentle tap on the cheek with her fan and answered:

"I forgive you the impertinence for the sake of the compliment."

Jacques looked at his friends with a malicious smile, and slipped through the crowd with his conquest leaning on his arm.

"Well, Patrizzi, you who have guessed the names of so many women, tell us that of the woman who has carried away de Vignes?"

"Parbleu! May the devil fly away with me if it is not Clemence Villa!"

"She has soon forgotten that poor Laurier," said one of the group surrounding the Prince.

"But Jacques has not forgotten him. Did you note his suffering when I spoke to him of his friend? His face, a moment before so fresh and smiling, was ghastly and distorted. It was frightful. He looked like a death's-head. Our friend Davidoff, you will remember, described with curious minuteness the moral condition of the sick man cured through

faith. The foundation of this recovery is frail," he said; "a word would suffice to destroy it. The passionate conviction which brought Jacques back to life, once weakened, he would relapse into a condition worse than before. He is under a sort of spell. He is possessed by an idea, and this gives him wonderful strength."

"That is what makes charlatans and quacks succeed," said the doctor.

"And then, there are besides imaginary invalids whom it is easy to cure, and our friend Jacques seems to be one of them."

Patrizzi shook his head and said gravely:

"I hope it may be so, for his mother's sake." A noisy exclamation cut short his words. A group of masqueraders pushed through the crowd, in the midst of exclamations and bursts of laughter. The group of which the Neapolitan was the centre broke up, and each of the young men went his way. Jacques, his new acquaintance on his arm, had gone out into the corridor, examining curiously the masked and hooded woman who drew him along, with

a rapid step, as if she feared to be recognized or spoken to. Arrived at the door of one of the stage boxes, she gave two quick knocks. A woman opened the door, and drawing aside, with a silent smile, allowed them to pass. She then discreetly left the room and closed the door of the box. Here Jacques and the domino found themselves alone.

The young man approached his companion and attempted to seize her hand.

"Be sensible, or I shall send you back to your friends."

"How can one be sensible near you?" he cried, smiling. "Ask something that is possible, not something that is impossible."

"You must obey me, however, or I shall go away, and we will never meet again."

"And if I consent to everything you exact, shall we see each other again then?"

"Certainly."

She sat down on the divan in the box, and leaned back, showing between her mask and her domino her white neck, and under the ruching of her hood an ear delicate and pink



as a rose-leaf. He sat down beside her, with an air of respectful propriety, although his heart beat passionately, so soon had this mysterious and fascinating creature succeeded in bewildering his senses.

Hidden in the obscurity of the box, close beside each other, Jacques and the masked woman were absolutely alone, more free than if silence and solitude reigned around them. In a low and insinuating voice he said :

"It seems to me that you are not unknown to me, and that we have met before. Will you not show me your face? I am sure you would not lose by doing so. You are young, and I am sure you are beautiful. Have you any reason, then, for wishing to remain unknown?"

She nodded affirmatively.

"Even to me?"

She nodded again.

The young man drew nearer.

"Where have I seen you?" he asked. "Here? In Paris?"

She did not answer.

He resumed :

"Do you live in Nice?"

She remained silent.

"We have met before, however, have we not?"

A smile crossed the lips of the unknown. She pushed Jacques away gently, her gaze seeming to dwell on him with pleasure, and said in a low voice:

"You are very inquisitive."

"And why should I not be so? Everything tells that it is my fate to love you, and yet it surprises you that I should wish to know who you are! I shall know to-morrow or the day after, or next week. Why not gratify me to-night, this very instant, and permit me to see your face? Would you have me love you, then, without knowing who you are?"

"Perhaps," she murmured.

"What are you afraid of? The anger of some jealous tyrant? Or perhaps you have not confidence in my discretion?"

She did not stir, thus giving room to the most romantic suppositions in his mind.

He smiled, and said passionately:

"Be it so then! I will love you as you are,—unknown, masked, mysterious."

He tried to take her hand again. Suddenly the hood of her domino fell back, and her mask, becoming displaced, disclosed to view her face.

Jacques started to his feet, stepped back, and cried in amazement:

"Clemence Villa!"

At the sound of her name the actress became calm and cold. She looked at Jacques, who, pale and motionless, was devouring her with his eyes. Throwing back her domino with a quick movement, she rose and stood before him in all her radiant beauty.

"You desired to know my name," she said. "You know it now."

Jacques, without looking at her, said slowly:

"It is a very short time since poor Pierre killed himself on your account."

"On my account?" she returned quickly. "Are you quite sure of that?"

Jacques grew paler still, and looking at Clemence with a glance of terror:

"Do you believe it was on some other



**"JACQUES STARTED TO HIS FEET."**

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person's account, then?" he said, resuming his seat on the sofa beside her.

"Do you not know that it was?"

She looked at him fixedly; he turned his head away, but seizing his arm with authority:

"It was with me he spent his last evening," she said. "It was to me he addressed his last words. I know what every one else, even Davidoff, is ignorant of. Pierre, weary of his feverish existence, disillusionized regarding his genius, and hopeless of the future, grew despondent, and in obedience to I know not what superstitious idea resolved to sacrifice his life for the sake of a beloved friend."

"Be silent!" interrupted Jacques, almost menacingly.

"Why should I be silent? Are you afraid of his ghost? It would neither injure nor reproach you. He knew that I loved you. He said to me, at the moment when he took his fatal resolution: 'He will love you better than I can. And if anything of what I was survives in him it will be a bond that shall

attach me to earth and make me thrill with joy in my grave.' "

At this sacrilegious falsehood the young man cast a glance of terror at Clemence. He made an effort to rise and leave her, but his limbs refused him their support, and he sank back on the sofa faint and trembling. He felt that she had spoken the truth, and that a mysterious tie bound him already to this woman, as if Pierre had transmitted his unconquerable passion for her to him with his soul. He rebelled against this bondage, however, and forgetful of his recent eagerness to win her favor he now desired to leave the woman he had so ardently wooed while she was as yet unknown to him. He rebelled against the thought of obeying a dead man's command; he could not consent to be the executor of his posthumous caprices. He called to his aid a last remnant of his former courage, coolness, and resolution, and rising turned a calm countenance toward Clemence.

"I shall not allow myself to be vanquished by your spells, beautiful enchantress," he said.

"Besides, it was useless to call in the aid of ghosts to enslave me. Your lips and your eyes would have been sufficient. You made a great mistake in mingling sorcery with love. I should be afraid now of your philters."

"I shall have no need to use them with you," responded Clemence in a tranquil voice, "and whether you wish it or, not you shall acknowledge my power."

He opened his lips to answer her in the negative, but before he could speak she had glided to the door and vanished like a phantom from the box.

Left alone, Jacques remained for a moment thoughtful. The dancing went on, noisy and uproarious, raising clouds of dust through which the lights of the ball-room shone dimly. In the boxes, the spectators, leaning their elbows on the velvet-covered railings, formed gay and brilliant groups. This overheated room, with its glare and noise, was pervaded by a sense of intense life. The young man suddenly remembered the miserable existence he had so short a time ago been leading, and an ardent joy filled



his heart at the thought that he was once more well and strong, and free to share in the enjoyment of a scene like this, after having given up, as he had done, the hope of ever being able to do so again.

How often had he said to himself with bitter longing: "Oh, if I could but cast aside this languor, if I could be well and strong again, with what zest would I enjoy life!" And this dream had become a reality. The charm had produced its miraculous effects. Death had abandoned his prey. Or rather he had chosen another victim in his place, nobler and more brilliant than he. At this thought the pale face of Pierre Laurier rose before Jacques's mental vision. With closed eyes, a bitter smile upon his lips and purple shadows on his temples, the painter slept his last sleep, rocked by the ceaseless motion of the waves, caressed by the sunlight, lulled by the murmur of the breeze. A wanderer on the surface of the ocean, he rose and fell with the tide, forever approaching and forever receding from the earth on which he had suffered so much.

Jacques followed with his mental gaze this corpse, this waif of the waters, terrified by the sinister apparition, yet, egotist as he was, reassured by the thought that his friend was indeed dead, since it was with his life he now lived. He desired to shake off the nightmare that so painfully oppressed him. He rose to his feet, and the spell was broken.

Before him he saw only the gallery filled with spectators of the scene below, at his feet the floor of the parquette, occupied by a motley crowd of dancers. What had seemed the noise of the waves was the sound of their voices and the stamping of their feet upon the floor: the murmur of the wind was the strains of the orchestra. There had been no apparition, everything was real. He felt eager and vigorous. And pleasure was within his grasp.

He passed his hand over his forehead; a smile crossed his face, he opened the door of the box, went out into the corridor, and walked nonchalantly through the crowd. Near the foyer he saw Patrizzi, who was flirting with a pretty woman. He approached the

prince with all the boisterous gayety of his wildest days, and said:

"Shall we go and have some supper, prince? There must be at least a dozen of our friends here whom we might get to join us. I think we have had all the enjoyment there is to be had in this place. Shall we leave it?"

"What have you done with the domino who carried you off so unceremoniously just now?" asked the Neapolitan. "Have you asked her to be one of the party? Is she to accompany us?"

"Oh, I came away and left her by herself."

"You did not find the interview amusing, then?"

"It was lugubrious. "

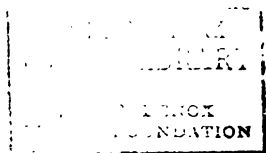
"Did she not give you a rendezvous for to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I shall not go."

As he pronounced these words a crowd of masqueraders poured into the corridor, and a shrill laugh was heard. Jacques turned pale. He looked around in terror for the white domino. But he saw only a group of young



**"HE SAW A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN HURRYING PAST IN PURSUIT OF SOME  
WOMEN IN FANCY DRESS."**



men hurrying past in pursuit of some women in fancy dress. A voice murmured in his ear: "Why do you boast and lie? Do you not know that you will keep your appointment?" And it seemed to him that the voice was that of Clemence Villa. He turned around. Only Patrizzi was near him. "I am losing my senses," he said to himself. He took the arm of the prince, and saying with feverish eagerness, "Come, let us go," he drew him away.

Next day when he awoke in his chamber at the villa of Beaulieu at about eleven in the morning, he had only a vague recollection of what had taken place the night before. He remembered that at supper he had drunk a great deal of champagne, and that he had played a waltz for the women to dance to.

From this moment everything was buried in oblivion. He had been taken home in a carriage by a friend who was returning to Eze. What had he said? What had he done? All was shrouded in a mystery which he had no desire to penetrate.

Stretched on his bed, his eyes drinking in

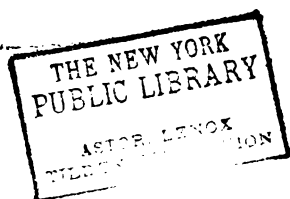
the sunlight that flooded the room, he felt an exquisite sense of well-being. This recumbent posture, which had seemed to him so irksome when he was shaken by his violent fits of coughing that left him bathed in perspiration, weak and exhausted, he now enjoyed with delight, his brain clear, his blood flowing calmly in his veins, his respiration regular. He had stayed up all night, he had supped, he had squandered his strength in one of those orgies which formerly would have cost him a week's illness and depression, and yet he found himself fresh and vigorous. He experienced a sense of profound satisfaction. The cure, so confidently predicted by the doctor, but of which he himself had had so little hope, had indeed been effected.

He remained thus for a time, enjoying the mere sense of being; then, springing at a bound from the bed, he began to dress. He went about his room, humming an air, careless and happy. He opened his window, and the warm breeze entered and played around his brow. The fragrance of the clematis reached him



**"ON THE TERRACE, WALKING TOWARD HIM SLOWLY, AS HE  
HAD WALKED A FEW MONTHS BEFORE, HE  
PERCEIVED HIS SISTER."**





from the garden below, and on the terrace, walking toward him slowly, as he had walked a few months before, he perceived his sister.

Her eyes were cast on the ground with an air of sadness, and she seemed, in her dark gown, as if she were in mourning for her lost happiness—her health, her youth, her gayety. The contrast between what she had been and what she now was, was so striking that Jacques could not repress a sigh. Disease had abandoned her grasp on him, but, as if a victim were necessary, she had seized instead upon poor Juliette. And in proportion as he became more erect and vigorous, she grew more bowed and feeble. The malady from which she suffered was one that medical science could not reach. From the day on which Dr. Davidoff had brought them the fatal news of Pierre's death, she had declined hourly in health. A profound languor had taken possession of her; she seldom spoke, and seized every opportunity to be alone. She seemed to feel a pleasure in her suffering. She disliked to be questioned about her health; she

made an effort, when with her mother and brother, to shake off her melancholy, but as soon as she found herself alone, she relapsed into her habitual sadness. At the moment when Jacques perceived her she was walking with languid step, a prey to her own sad thoughts, and under the brilliant sunshine, amid the vivid green of the trees and the gay colors of the flowers, her face looked like a dark blot upon the landscape. Jacques descended into the garden, and observing his mother in the drawing-room went in and kissed her. She looked at him attentively, and seeing him so radiant with health, she smiled.

"You returned home late," she said. "It is hardly prudent for you to sit up so late, when you have so recently recovered from your illness."

"It is so long since I have had any pleasure," he answered.

"You enjoyed yourself, at least?" she asked.

"Very much."

"Do not abuse your health, my child. Do not be ungrateful to Providence who has

restored it to you. And do not add to my anxieties. I am troubled enough about your sister's condition."

"Is she worse to-day?"

"No. And then how should we know it if she were? She utters no complaint. She makes every effort to conceal her dejection. But she cannot deceive me. Day by day I see her grow weaker. Ah, if Davidoff, who benefited you so much, were only here now!"

At these words the young man turned pale.

He fancied he saw the sardonic countenance of the Russian doctor rise before him. What could Davidoff do? Was he to be asked to work another miracle? Jacques knew very well how powerless was medical science. He knew how useless it had proved in his own case. The help he had received had come to him from an unknown source. But was it not at the price of a terrible sacrifice that this help had been obtained. Had it not been necessary, to vitalize and purify his blood, that the blood of another should be shed for him? And was not this voluntary sacrifice of a human life to

save that of another, marked out for destruction by the hand of fate, a repetition of the human sacrifices offered up on the altars of the pagan gods of antiquity. Could the miracle be wrought a second time? And who should make the sacrifice? Pierre had made it for him. Who would make it for Juliette?

The sound of his mother's voice drew him from his meditation.

"Besides," she added, "even if the doctor were here, would Juliette follow his directions? When she is asked about her health she answers that she is not ill, that she is only a little tired; that there is no cause for anxiety. But this very indifference which she manifests regarding herself makes me all the more uneasy, because in it I see the indication of a moral cause for her malady, more difficult to combat than any physical one."

"A moral cause!" repeated Jacques.

"Yes; the child has a secret grief, and notwithstanding the courageous efforts she makes to conceal it, she cannot deceive me. Each morning I see that she is paler than the last

from the sleepless hours she has spent during the night. And it has been so for the past two months. Oh, I know the exact date of the commencement of her malady. It has remained indelibly fixed upon my memory. It is both a sad and a happy one for me, for it marks at once the beginning of your recovery and the beginning of the illness of your sister. Yes, Juliette received the blow from which she is now suffering on the day when Dr. Davidoff came to announce to us the death of Pierre Laurier."

If Madame de Vignes had been observing Jacques she would have been terrified by the look of anguish that distorted his features. What he had already vaguely suspected his mother had put into words. The death of Pierre had produced at once a salutary and a pernicious effect; it had restored him to life and given her death-blow to Juliette.

At this plain statement of facts a sudden anger was kindled in his heart against the innocent girl, whose interests were so directly opposed to his own that what was advantage-

ous to him was fatal to her, and that it seemed impossible to make the brother live without causing the death of the sister. A fantastic idea presented itself to his mind, symbolizing their destinies under the colors of the cards, red and black—the one the color of blood, the other the color of mourning. If red turned up Juliette was to die; if black, he must fall back into his previous state of suffering.

A frenzy of selfishness seized upon him, and all his energies were concentrated in the desperate desire for life. He felt himself capable of anything to preserve it—even a crime. He carried his baseness as far as to raise his eyes to the sick girl, walking pensively in the garden, and to say to himself with fiendish satisfaction: "Two months ago it was I who dragged myself along that sunny walk, and I am now strong and able to enjoy life. All my regrets, all my complaints, which then seemed so unavailing, I may now cast to the winds, and indulge without restraint my desires and my hopes. All that I came so near losing I have regained. Life surges triumphantly

within me, what matters the price I have paid for it!"

His conscience was silent. No voice rose up within him to protest against this monstrous deification of self. His heart was dumb, his mind was closed to every generous thought. No feeling within him rebelled against this horrible absolution which he gave himself for all the evil his useless existence had caused, and was yet to cause.

Yet in the midst of this moral insensibility a few words uttered by his mother caused him to tremble.

"I believe," she said, "that Juliette loved Pierre Laurier in secret. I have not dared to question her, fearing to hear her answer in the affirmative. For I could give her no consolation, and what can there be more cruel for a mother than to see her child grieving without being able to hold out to her a ray of hope? Yet if this be the case we ought to know it, for here, perhaps, is the wound we must seek to heal."

Jacques felt as if a power which he could not



resist impelled him to try to clear up this painful mystery. Everything relating to his friend's death had a terrifying effect upon him, yet he felt attracted to the subject with invincible curiosity; he desired and, at the same time, feared to know the truth. He wished to be silent, yet he could not forbear saying:

"What if I were to speak to her? She might confide her secret to me."

"Question her very gently, then, and if she seems reluctant, do not urge her to answer. Leave her at liberty to keep her secret."

"Have no fear."

Juliette was approaching. Mme. de Vignes made a last mute appeal to Jacques's tenderness and compassion for his sister, and went into the house.

The young girl, raising her eyes, saw her brother standing before her as if waiting for her. Her countenance lighted up, and a flush mounted to her cheeks. She seemed transformed, and the Juliette of the past, happy, gay, and blooming, reappeared for an instant. But her brow clouded again, her features relaxed,



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her mouth lost its smile, and she was once more grave and sad, as usual. Of her own accord she took her brother's arm, and leaning on it with evident pleasure,—

"You are now entirely well, my dear Jacques," she said.

He nodded affirmatively, pressing Juliette's hand gently at the same time.

"What a joy it is not to see you any longer sick and unhappy," she continued; "for you did not bear your illness with patience; you were not disposed to be resigned."

She shook her head gently as if to say: "Women are more courageous; they bear suffering better." They had reached the very spot in the veranda in front of the house where Davidoff had announced to Jacques the death of Pierre Laurier. The window of the drawing-room, concealed by the blinds, was now as then half open, but Juliette was no longer on the watch for evil tidings. She knew her fate, and she awaited only the end of her sufferings. But no one on earth could give it to her. This deliverance must come to her from

heaven. She seated herself, tranquil and indifferent, in one of the willow chairs, and fixed her gaze on the sea. "I must question her," said Jacques to himself. "What shall I say to her, and how begin the conversation? Her little head is so clear! She will weigh each one of my words and guess from them the meaning of my questions. The slightest blunder would put her on her guard. And if she mistrusts me in the least I shall get nothing from her. Her lips will be sealed."

"Here we are in the middle of March," he began with a meditative air. "We must soon return to Paris. Will you not be sorry to leave this place, dear?"

"It matters little to me where I am," she answered indifferently, as if she thought to herself, "There is but one place where I can be at rest,—in the peaceful and silent tomb."

"I had fancied our departure would not please you, that perhaps it might grieve you, and I was going to ask our mother to stay here a few weeks longer."

She bent her head with a frown, and seemed

determined to betray nothing of her thoughts. Her brother watched her with attention, in the hope of intercepting a quicker throb than usual of this poor wounded heart.

"As for me," he pursued, "I should not have been sorry to remain here longer. I shall leave this place with regret, for I am now bound to it by a most painful tie."

His voice failed him. He could never mention Laurier's name without a secret shudder, as if he felt he himself were in some way accountable for his tragic fate.

"Here I lost my dearest friend," he resumed, "a loss for which I can never be consoled. I fancy that in leaving this place I shall be going farther away from him; although I know not where his last resting-place is, since the waves have not given him back to us, and we have not been permitted the supreme consolation of saying a last prayer over his remains. This spot, where I saw him for the last time, has a fascination for me, as if I had a secret hope that I should here see him one day reappear."

At these words Juliette trembled, and she

raised her eyes to her brother's with a questioning look. She felt a movement of joy, quickly repressed, however..

"Do you think it possible, then, that he is not dead?" she asked.

"His body has never been recovered," he answered in a hollow voice.

"And is he, alas! the only one that the jealous sea has refused to give up," cried the young girl, with a heart-rending look. "No! we ought not to cherish any illusions, or lull ourselves with false hopes. He had lost faith in the future, he had lost confidence in his friends, life had ceased to possess any attraction for him. Our loss is certain, irreparable. We shall never see him again! He has left us forever. We shall never again hear his voice, nor his laughter—nor even his complaints. He has gone to the land from which no one returns—and we may weep for him without any fear of our tears being causelessly shed."

She spoke with increasing agitation, and her grief, no longer restrained, overflowed from her heart to her lips like a torrent, swollen

by a sudden rain-storm. Surprised, Jacques looked at his sister, seeking to discover, in the midst of the bitterness of the grief which she expressed, some trace of a reproach addressed to himself.

"Does she suspect the terrible secret?" he asked himself. "If she had to decide between Pierre and me, which would she choose? Would she sacrifice her brother or her lover?"

Juliette wiped away the tears which flowed down her cheeks, and remained silent for a moment; then she said:

"Heaven, in compensation, has delivered us from our anxiety in regard to your health. Enjoy life, Jacques, employ it in loving us dearly."

She made a movement as if to go. He detained her, and looking at her fixedly said:

"This, then, is the secret of your illness and your dejection. You loved him."

She answered without hesitation and without embarrassment:

"With all my soul. Besides my mother and



you he was the only one who occupied my thoughts."

"You are not yet twenty. At your age there is no sorrow which is eternal. The future is still before you."

She bowed her head dejectedly; then said with great sweetness:

"Promise me never to speak on this subject again, will you? It would only cause me useless suffering. I am not one of those who can forget their sorrows, or be consoled for them. In the secret depths of my heart, the memory of Pierre will be the object of my worship. I shall think ceaselessly of him, but to hear his name uttered is more than I can bear. I promise you, on my part, to take care of myself and to neglect nothing that might contribute to my health. I do not wish to distress you, nor cause you anxiety; but leave me at liberty to indulge my grief."

She smiled sweetly at her brother, and resumed her solitary walk up and down the terrace.

Much affected, Jacques entered the house

and went up to his mother's room. Madame de Vignes was anxiously waiting for him.

"Well?" she asked as soon as she saw him enter.

"Well, I have spoken to her as we agreed, and I found her, if not reasonable, at least very calm. She grieves deeply and does not wish to be consoled. I had thought that a prolongation of our stay here might be beneficial to her, but I was mistaken. I think the best course to take would be to return to Paris at once, and make the child resume her former way of living. Solitude is not good for her. She has too much time in which to let her thoughts dwell on the one theme. Our friends will take possession of her. She will be diverted in spite of herself and this will have a favorable effect on her spirits, I hope."

"Do you think it would be well to make preparations for our departure at once, then?"

"No, that would seem too sudden. In a couple of weeks we might go."

"But you, my dear boy, would not the

change of climate be prejudicial to you? We are still in March; in Paris it is still cold."

"No matter! My health is now excellent, and it is of Juliette alone that we must think."

"Very well, I will do as you advise then."

Jacques kissed his mother's hand tenderly. The breakfast bell rang, and they went into the dining-room, where Juliette soon joined them. Mme. de Vignes and her son spoke on indifferent subjects: Juliette was silent. The repast was a short one. A restraint seemed to weigh upon them all, and each wished to be alone. As soon as the meal was over they rose. The mother and daughter returned to their rooms in silence. Jacques lighted a cigar and went to take a solitary walk on the sea-shore.

In an indentation of the coast bordered by red rocks, the tide ebbed and flowed, forming a little creek. Vegetation stopped at the edge of the water, but on the sand mosses of a grayish-green color, resembling lichens, grew vigorously. Jacques seated himself here, and soothed by the delicious mildness of the sun-

shine fell into a reverie. Silence and solitude reigned around. Immensity of space was before him, and above him. The sea and the sky met, blending imperceptibly together in the blue distance. Jacques's eyes, fixed upon the far horizon, were dazzled by the clear brightness of the atmosphere, and fascinated by the monotonous motion of the waves.

Little by little the scene before him faded from his view, and he saw again the ball-room as on the night of the *veglione*. He heard again the noise of the crowd, the stamping of the dancers on the floor, and the strains of the orchestra. He saw pictured before him the whole scene of the evening of the Carnival, and among the promenaders he could distinguish the white domino. She smiled seductively under the lace of her mask, and her eyes glittered like diamonds through the apertures in the satin. The subtle and penetrating odor which emanated from her enveloped Jacques, and in this solitary spot he had so lively a sense of the proximity of this fascinating woman that he stretched out his arms vaguely

as if to embrace her. The spell of the vision was broken, and he found himself once more alone. A feeling of irritation took possession of him at the thought that he should be haunted thus by the remembrance of Clemence—that she should have such power over him, that he could not abandon himself to his thoughts for a moment without being at the mercy of this sorceress. She had said to him, “Whether you wish it or not.” It was in vain for him to try to resist her. He felt that she had woven her toils around him, triumphant and perfidious, the mistress of his thoughts and of his heart, and the despotic sovereign of his will. He asked himself why he resisted her, why he had an instinctive repugnance or rather fear of her. He knew she was dangerous; all who had approached her had suffered through her. And yet how beautiful she was, with her red lips, her velvety eyes, her divine form! What had he to fear? The remembrance of Pierre came to him. Had she not also loved him, the great artist? And with the same love of change which made it impossible for her to be

constant to any one, had she not soon grown tired of him and cast him off? For her he had allowed the exquisite flower of his genius to wither. Like a high-mettled horse harnessed to a heavy load he had worked in order to earn money, to heap gifts upon her, and when he could no longer work, he had tried to win at play what his genius, strained and enervated, could no longer procure. All the various stages in the miserable story of Laurier's passion were known to Jacques. He had seen the painter pass through them one by one, in his lucid moments full of shame and exasperation at his folly, but ready to return to his bondage the moment the woman, at once hated and adored, beckoned to him with her rosy finger or let fall a word of tenderness. What was there, then, so satanic or so divine in this creature that she should exercise over men's hearts so potent a spell?

The only rival who could have triumphed over her was death. Why had his friend in a manner bequeathed her to him? Was it that he might avenge him? And did he think him

capable of inspiring this enchantress with love?

He saw Pierre's face as it had haunted him so often of late in his terrible dreams. It wore a look of indescribable sadness; he fancied he saw the lips move and that he heard them say: "Take care; I have bestowed life upon you, but she will destroy it. Destruction is her mission on earth. Avoid her, beware of her! See to what she has brought me. She lied to you when she told you that it was my wish that you should love her. No, I have fled from her into the bosom of oblivion! Do not believe her, do not listen to her, do not look at her. Withdraw from her path. When you are with her you cannot resist her. This is the decisive moment in which you must choose between life and death."

The sombre countenance of Laurier faded away, and Jacques found himself once more alone, beside the restless sea in this enchanted solitude, where nature bloomed radiantly under a cloudless sky. He said to himself: "I am growing superstitious. What do the fears and

the scruples that torment me mean? Can my life depend upon this woman? I have not yet so completely recovered from my illness as I had thought. But what is the cause of the anxiety I feel? Through what moral crisis am I passing? Because Pierre loved this woman is it then criminal in me to love her? For this is the thought from which my scruples spring. And after all is there not a great deal of individual caprice and of conventionality in what people have agreed to call right and wrong?"

"The only object of life is happiness," selfishness answered. And was not the love of this woman necessary to his happiness? His heart, filled with her image, was deaf to the voice of reason. At this very moment, seated on this sunny rock, the waves dashing their spray up to his feet, silence and solitude around, he felt himself drawn toward the enchantress, and he trembled with impatience. He knew that within half an hour's distance the Battle of Flowers at Nice was drawing all the world of fashion to the Promenade des Anglais. Clemence would be there waiting for him,



expecting him. He had but a step to take to join her.

His heart palpitated violently. His whole being reached out toward her. His reason, though vanquished, still protested: "But she has defied you. She has told you she would hold you in her chains, willing or unwilling. Are you then going to obey her as if you were her slave? Truly you have very little pride or courage. Stay where you are, do not go. Avoid her."

But he was already on his feet. The magnetic influence which had always drawn Laurier back to her, no matter how much he might resist it, now exercised its sway over Jacques. The spell of this woman who, ghoulish-like, sapped the power of will of those over whom she wished to cast her spells, triumphed over distance, over prudence, and over reason. It was in vain for Jacques longer to resist; she had already conquered. He went back to the house, took his hat and coat, and went away without bidding his sister good-by.

## V.

THE passion with which Clemence had inspired Jacques was all the more violent for having been so long resisted. And it was shared by her, and with equal ardor. For a time they lived apart from the world, devoted exclusively to each other, wandering among the flowering orange-trees of the garden, or reclining among the silken cushions of the Moorish salon in the smiling villa on the Mentone road.

In the evening Jacques tore himself away with difficulty from the enchantress and returned to Beaulieu. His mother and sister saw him only for an instant in the morning before he went out. And with profound sadness Mme. de Vignes saw that the unlooked-for restoration of her son to health had been the signal for the resumption of the dissipated life he had formerly led, and which had so nearly brought him to his grave. She had ventured a

remonstrance, which had been received with a smile. Jacques, in a hurry to go, had kissed his mother, assuring her that he had never felt stronger in his life, which was true, and that she had no cause for uneasiness. And without staying further to listen to her counsels or her entreaties he had taken the train for Monte Carlo.

The two women were thus left entirely alone and the days passed in silence and sadness.

Meantime Jacques lived under the influence of the spell that had sapped the strength, intellectual and moral, of Pierre Laurier, that had degraded his character and changed the brilliant artist into the helpless being who had resolved to seek relief from his misery in death.

Clemence, all the more dangerous from the sincerity of her passion, loved now as she had never loved before. In the fair and somewhat effeminate beauty of this young man she found the charm she had needed to captivate her stronger nature. She dominated him completely, and left him not a thought nor a feeling that was not inspired by her.

In the midst of this intoxication the time fixed upon for the departure of the de Vignes arrived, and Clemence, unable to support the thought of separating from Jacques, prepared to return to Paris. They left with regret this enchanting country which seemed made for love. But they consoled themselves by thinking that in the city they should have greater facilities for enjoying each other's society without restraint than here.

Their return to Paris produced a very different effect upon Jacques from that which it produced upon Clemence. Jacques experienced an intense joy in being once more in the city he had thought at one time during his illness that he should never see again.

The bustle and animation of Paris captivated him. The intoxication of Parisian life had taken possession of him. He had left a delightful climate, he was fresh from scenes that enchanted the eye, yet the cloudy sky of Paris, the stone pavements of the streets had a charm for him which he had not found in them, and he said to himself that there was nothing

in the world more beautiful. He installed himself again joyfully in his bachelor apartments, and felt delightfully at home in them.

Clemence, established once more in her magnificent house in the Avenue Hoche, returned to the luxury and the cares of her former existence. In Monte Carlo she had lived like any bourgeoisie. In Paris she was once more the celebrated actress, whose establishment cost three hundred thousand francs a year to support. She no longer seemed the same person to Jacques. A sudden transformation had taken place in her. Her appearance, her manner, her walk had entirely changed.

She spoke abruptly, her glance was imperious. Everything about her revealed the woman armed for the battle of life, always on her guard, lest she should be taken at a disadvantage and conquered. She showed the liveliest tenderness for Jacques and repeatedly assured him of her affection, but the fact of her doing so showed already a diminution of his influence, which gave the young man food for

thought. Clemence observed this feeling, and tried to dissipate it. She grew gentle and caressing, and for a time was fond and amiable as before.

But the feeling of security in her affection which Jacques had entertained was at an end. In the little villa at Monte Carlo he might have cherished the illusion that she had never loved any one as she loved him. In her sumptuous house at Paris, everything spoke too plainly of her past for this to be the case. A feeling of disquietude took possession of him. He became sombre and irritable. He was no longer sure of her affection for him, and his love for her increased in consequence.

They had said they would never separate, and they saw less of each other than before. Not by the wish of Clemence, but her existence was no longer the same, and the exigencies of her establishment took up her time at the expense of her affection. Jacques acquired the habit of visiting her only at stated times, and gradually learned to set bounds to the expression of his passion for her. This was

unfortunate. At Monte Carlo he would doubtless soon have wearied of her. But the obstacles his passion encountered in Paris inflamed it still further instead of weakening it.

Clemence, with the keenness of observation of a woman of the world, discerned at once the state of his feelings. She had learned long ago that security soon engenders indifference, and that the sharpest spur to love is uncertainty. Seeing Jacques thus uneasy and on the point of becoming a jealous lover, she took a malicious pleasure in holding him in suspense, letting him hope and fear by turns.

Taciturn when he was not with Clemence, Jacques caused his mother grave anxiety by the languor and apathy of his manner. He would spend hours stretched on the sofa in his smoking-room, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, smoking opium cigarettes which dulled his brain, without moving, without uttering a word, and seemingly lost in this species of haschisch dream. His health still remained good, although the fresh color he had brought with him from the south had disappeared. He

grew thin, but his nervous force sustained him in the life of pleasure he still continued to lead.

He went to his club every day at five, and later on in the evening when he was not with Clemence. He played heavily, and in the beginning had extraordinary luck. He won large sums at *écarté*. He thought nothing of winning five hundred louis before dinner, and this money, so easily obtained, he squandered with superb indifference. It gave him pleasure to add to the luxuries that surrounded Clemence. He desired to heap princely gifts upon her instead of the roses and violets he had brought to her at Monte Carlo, and from this forth his life became a hell.

His gains at *écarté* no longer sufficed to supply his wants; and *baccarat* seemed to offer him a wider field. Play, which had at first been a distraction, then a means to obtain money, now became a passion. He loved it not only for the money with which it supplied him, but also for its excitement. He cut the cards with a sublime impassiveness that masked devouring anxiety. He would lose on a card 10,000



francs, without a change in his countenance or a tremor in his voice. But he boiled inwardly, and the strain on his nerves was all the greater for the efforts he made to conceal it. When, after a couple of hours of alternate successes and reverses, fortune finally took his side, the tension of his mind, excited by the desire to triumph, relaxed and he fell into a delicious state of beatitude. He experienced an instant of indescribable intoxication during which he forgot everything that was not play.

Clemence was not long in discovering that she did not reign alone in the heart of Jacques, but she did not take umbrage at the presence there of this victorious rival, to whom she owed so large a share of her luxuries. Besides, a modification had taken place in her own sentiments. The feeling to which she had yielded herself completely in the solitude of the country was not strong enough to resist the distractions of Paris. She resumed her former mode of life. Seeing once more her friends and acquaintances, the daily round of pleas-

ures in which she engaged left her less time than before to devote to Jacques.

And then Jacques himself, whose resistance to her power at first had added to the intensity of her passion for him, now, yielding to all her caprices, began to weary her. From the moment in which she saw that he was her slave he ceased to possess attractions for her. And in this the actress was no worse than the generality of women, and the blame for what must soon take place lay with Jacques. He had modified, of his own accord, the conditions of his intimacy with Clemence. He had ignored the fundamental axiom of the philosophy of love that the affection of a woman is in direct proportion to the sacrifices it exacts from her. Secure as she was in the possession of his love, his hold upon her affections had weakened. But because she no longer loved him was no reason that she should give him back his liberty. It was not in her nature to show such generosity. She had held Laurier in her toils a full year after she had ceased to care for him, and it was during this time that the artist, de-

graded, humiliated, and tortured, had resolved to put an end to an existence which had become intolerable to him. Jacques as yet suspected nothing. Practised in the arts of deceit, Clemence charmed him as before by the grace of her smile, the sweetness of her words, the tenderness of her endearments.

He now scarcely ever went to visit his mother. The atmosphere of the house was too gloomy for him, and inspired him with no wish to return to it. His sister, although the malady which was sapping her life had developed no recognizable symptoms, drooped more and more every day—grew every day paler and more fragile. But by an effort of her will she succeeded in appearing cheerful, in order to keep up her mother's spirits. But Mme. de Vignes was not deceived, and the two women, each trying to appear cheerful to the other, lived in secret anguish.

The doctors had decided that the malady of Juliette was anæmia. They found no organic trouble, either of the heart or the lungs. They saw, however, that her strength visibly de-

clined. It almost seemed as if Jacques had drawn from his sister all her vitality, and given her his own weakness in exchange. It was a matter of no slight astonishment to the physicians who had attended the brother the year before, to see him now leading the dissipated life he led, while Juliette, radiant in health last spring, had grown sickly and feeble. And Jacques, whom these two women had surrounded with so much care and tenderness, wearied by his mother's sadness, chilled by the sorrowful smile of his sister, made his visits rarer and rarer, throwing himself with desperate ardor into his old life.

The month of June had arrived, and Clemence wished, according to her custom, to instal herself at Deauville. Selim Nuño, for some years past, had placed his splendid villa every summer at the actress's disposal. Jacques, who viewed with displeasure the visits of the old financier to Clemence, opposed the project as soon as she mentioned it to him. To go to the sea-shore, good; to choose Deauville, very good, also. But to accept the hospitality of

Nuño, what for? To this question Clemence responded without hesitation.

"For ten years past, my dear Jacques, Selim has been my true and constant friend. Men are changeable. You love me to-day; to-morrow you may forget me. The friends on whom one may depend under any circumstances are rare; their affection is not to be thrown away. And then, to speak frankly, Jacques, you cannot be jealous of this old man? He is like a father to me. And you know very well besides you have no reason to be afraid of any one."

She tried to coax him out of his opposition, but the young man's objections were based on a solid foundation. He shook his head as he listened to her, without being convinced by her arguments.

"I should not like to be a visitor at M. Nuño's house," he said, "for although he will not reside in the villa, you will be none the less his guest. Let us go back to Monte Carlo, to the delightful solitude of the country, where you will be free to devote all your time to me.

Here you are so taken up with your occupations and your friends, that I enjoy scarcely any of your society. There I should have you all to myself, and no one could take you away from me."

He spoke with passion, and Clemence listened to him with a curious sensation. His voice, formerly so sweet to her ears, now seemed commonplace and failed to awaken any emotion within her. His hands, which clasped hers, no longer sent a thrill through her. She saw in him only a fair, handsome young man whose exactions began to weary her. To his importunities she responded with a smile which Jacques took as a presage of victory and a proof of her affection. She, however, knew that the flame was extinguished and that nothing could relight it. Scarcely four months had passed and the sentiment with which he had inspired her was dead forever.

Her thoughts went back to the night of the *veglione* when they had first met. How vivid the emotion she had experienced then! And now how weary and indifferent she felt. He

was still under the influence of his passion, but as for her, her infatuation for him was at an end.

While he clasped her hands she was saying to herself:

"No, no, it is over. He adores me and I am weary of him. Am I never then to find a man who will refuse to acknowledge my power, or to whom I could prove constant."

She rose from the sofa where she had been sitting beside Jacques, and leaning against the chimney-piece with a thoughtful air, said:

"Very well, then, be it as you wish. Any other house will do as well, provided only it be large, well situated, and have good stables for the horses, for I shall take all my establishment with me. But I must tell you beforehand that Nuño shall visit me there with as much freedom as anywhere else, for I have no intention of breaking off with my friends, nor of living in seclusion."

"And has such an idea ever occurred to me?" protested Jacques. "Have I not confidence in you?"

Clemence looked at him in silence for a moment, and a fugitive smile crossed her lips; then she said slowly:

"You are right to have confidence in me: if you mistrusted me it would not make the slightest difference!"

The evening was warm and fine. They went together to dine at the "Ambassadors." At eleven, Clemence, who was cross and complained of not feeling well, sent Jacques away. Irritated, he went to the club, and as a game at baccarat was going on, he took the bank and proceeded to deal the cards. Curious contradiction: fortunate at cards so long as he had been fortunate in love, the very hour in which Clemence discovered that she no longer loved him seemed to be the turning-point in his luck also. Fortune suddenly withdrew her favor, and when he left the club he was a loser to the amount of three thousand louis.

He had won so much during the past few months that he attached but little importance to these reverses, which he looked upon as accidental. He was only all the more eager to



have his revenge; but he lost more heavily than before. He could not believe that his ill-luck was going to continue, and he obstinately persisted in his efforts to retrieve his ill-fortune, but with ever worse results.

The house at Trouville was hired, and as Clemence was ready to leave Paris he determined at last to cut short this continued run of ill-luck, and they set out for the Norman coast.

There they continued the same life as at Paris, only seeing more of each other, which augmented the coldness of Clemence, forced as she was to make the effort to appear agreeable to a man who now wearied her. She revenged herself by employing her ingenuity in devising ways to make him spend money. At this time Jacques, his means of supply being cut off, was obliged to draw upon the fund he had in reserve. The difficulties of the situation seemed to excite him, and he had never loved Clemence as much as now, when she was beginning to tire of him.

The establishment of Clemence was main-



**"PARTIES COMPOSED OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF TROUVILLE, WERE CONSTANTLY  
TO BE SEEN DASHING ALONG THE HONFLEUR OR VILLERS ROAD."**

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tained on a large scale and the excursions she was daily getting up were the talk of the place.

Parties, composed of the young people of Trouville, were constantly to be seen dashing along the Honfleur or Villers road. The house on such days was empty and there was not a horse to be had in the whole place. The women of the party went in carriages, and they all stopped to breakfast at one of the pretty and excellent inns on the road. Amid clouds of dust raised by the horses' feet, and under the brilliant sunshine, the cavaliers dismounting helped the women to descend from the coaches, in the midst of joyful cries and bursts of laughter, the villagers standing motionless in their doorways in open-mouthed wonder at the vision of gay costumes and little feet that flew rapidly past.

At other times they would take the steam yacht of Baron Trésorier and sail along a placid sea to Fécamp or Cherbourg. In the evening all the gay party would assemble in the Casino of Trouville, and dance till midnight. Then they would return home, weary of the pleasures

of the day, and an hour later, the men of the party would meet again at the club and spend the rest of the night, till day dawned, at cards. Jacques, with stern but impassive countenance, played with persistent ill-luck, and saw the last remnant of his little fortune disappearing by degrees. He was not discouraged, however, and with incomprehensible faith in his luck awaited its return. Fortune, he said to himself, could not always prove faithless to him, and a few nights' winnings would retrieve his losses. A method of reasoning common with all gamblers; a confidence common to all losers, which is seldom justified by the event.

One evening when he had been playing with his habitual ill-luck, the bank being put up for bids, he heard a voice which he recognized utter the sacred words : "The bank is open for play." He raised his eyes, and, separated from him only by the length of the table, he saw Patrizzi before him. His glance encountered that of the Prince, who gave him a friendly smile. At the same moment a man who had been standing behind the Neapolitan emerged

from the group, and Jacques, with a horrible tightening of the heart, recognized Dr. Davidoff.

The young man stood rooted to the spot. A cold perspiration broke out on his forehead, and he heard a buzzing sound in his ears. It seemed to him as if the ghastly image of death had risen up before him. He was still motionless, without the power to advance or retreat, fascinated by the mocking glance of the Russian, when Patrizzi coming behind him laid his hand upon his shoulder. Jacques turned round with an effort, and with a haggard look gave his attention to the Prince, who was speaking to him. He hardly understood what the Neapolitan was saying, but the thought that he was being observed, and that his manner must awaken surprise, restored to him his strength in a measure; he passed his hand over his forehead and made the effort to say to Patrizzi:

"Have you been here long?"

"About a quarter of an hour," the Prince answered. "Davidoff and I came in just as

your bank was being most vigorously attacked. Those Englishmen have made some rude assaults upon you, my dear friend."

"I am not very lucky just now," stammered Jacques.

"That is what those gentlemen were just saying. But excuse me, they are waiting for me to deal. I am going to try to avenge you. Stay, here is Davidoff."

He took his place on the high chair, shuffled the cards, and when they were cut, began the game. Davidoff withdrew slowly from the group of which he formed a part and advanced toward Jacques. As he did so he examined the latter attentively. When he was close beside him he took his outstretched hand in his rather like a physician than a friend. He felt his pulse, and shaking his head, said:

"You are feverish, Jacques: the life you are leading is bad for you."

These words of warning, uttered by the doctor, broke the spell which had held the young man. He no longer saw in Davidoff the mysterious personage, possessor of the

secret by means of which life had been restored to his exhausted body, but a man like other men. He recovered his self-possession and said gayly:

"It would be bad for anybody. Yet as you see, it does not affect me greatly. But it is excessively warm here. Shall we go out into the air?"

He took his overcoat, and linking his arm through Davidoff's they went out on the terrace. The night was a lovely one. The sky sparkled with stars. The waves died away noiselessly on the beach. To the north the lights of Havre shone in the distance. A profound calm reigned around. The two men walked for a few moments without speaking, turning over in their minds the events in which they had taken a part, and which bound them so strongly together. They had a thousand questions to ask each other. But the fear of saying too much made them hesitate about asking them. Jacques was the first to speak.

"You have just arrived in Trouville?" he asked the doctor with affected indifference.



"The yacht of Count Woreseff, whose guest I am," answered the doctor, "arrived in port at about five this afternoon. We dined at the 'Roches Noires.' As the Count was tired, he remained on board, and Patrizzi and I came here to the Casino, where I knew we should find you."

"Ah, you have been hearing about me, then?"

"That you have been here for the last three weeks with Clemence Villa, that you play heavily, but with persistent ill-luck, and that your health is good—this is what I have been hearing about you."

Jacques frowned. "And you have heard the truth," he said.

"Is this, then, the use you make of your recovered health?" asked the doctor gently. "Oh, you know I do not wish to pose as a moralist or a preacher! You know that if I speak thus it is because I take a friendly interest in you. Clemence Villa! This is the woman in whose train I find you. And it is for her you play so desperately. Come, my

dear friend, are you sure you are in your senses?"

"I am sure I am madly in love with her!" returned Jacques in a stifled voice. "But I am not sure that it is in my power to avoid being so."

He fixed a troubled glance upon the doctor.

"I must not give myself time for reflection," he resumed, "for if I did I should easily arrive at the conviction that my existence was fraught with danger to others and to myself. No, no, I must not reflect. And the life you reproach me with leading is the only one that I can endure."

"But you are not strong enough to stand it," said Davidoff; "it will kill you."

Jacques laughed nervously.

"Do you think so?" he said. "Does it depend upon me to give it up? Am I not pushed on by a sort of fatality?"

"Take care," said the doctor with severity. "This way of reasoning, which would relieve you from a personal responsibility in your actions, might serve as an excuse for a great

many errors. You feared you were going to die and you are still alive—this is what is certain. Do not attribute this to any supernatural cause. You are cured of the malady from which you suffered. Are you the first to be cured of an apparently fatal disease? It was I who attended you; give me the credit of your cure, and do not put any faith in Pythagorean fancies that would make a child laugh."

"Did you laugh at them that night at Monte Carlo when you told us that story?"

"Eh! did I say I believed in what I was telling you? After an excellent dinner spiritualism was brought on the tapis, and the transmigration of souls discussed in all its bearings. I took my part in the discussion, but if you wish to know my real opinion in the matter, I am a materialist. Consequently I cannot admit that a body is animated by an element of which I do not acknowledge the existence."

"How then was I saved from death?" asked Jacques with a trembling voice.

"You were saved because the disease you were suffering from took a favorable turn and

the abscess in your lung was healed, thanks to the treatment you followed, aided by the salutary influence of the climate. What do you see miraculous in that? Every year cures equally wonderful occur, without their subjects suffering on that account any mysterious disturbance of mind."

They had stopped at the edge of the water, which gleamed in the moon's rays like silver. Jacques was silent for a moment; then, as if he wished to cast off a weight that was pressing the life out of him, he said:

"And Pierre Laurier?"

"Pierre Laurier had lost his senses," responded Davidoff in a grave voice, "and you know what made him lose them. Jacques, I wish I could restore you to yourself, and show you how fatal is the life you are leading, and what is the true character of the woman for whom you sacrifice everything."

"Be silent!" cried Jacques with violence. "I cannot permit you to speak of her in this way before me."

"On the night of Laurier's disappearance,"

continued the Russian physician, "he it was, not I, who launched out in abuse of Clemence. He cursed her. Yet he returned to her.—Come, Jacques, be reasonable for an instant, and see things as they are. What I said to Pierre on that fatal night, standing on the sea-shore, as we are standing now, under a starry sky and on a night like this, I repeat to you. He answered me that it was no use, that he had not the strength to follow my advice. He left me, and I never saw him again. But at least he was alone in the world. You have a mother, a sister,—think of them. Do you wish to make them wretched?"

"I make them wretched already, Davidoff," answered Jacques with anguish. "I cause them many anxieties, many cares, many torments. They are very unhappy, and through my fault. Oh, I know how culpable I am, and I am all the more so because they are so gentle and resigned. You have not seen my sister since your return. It will frighten you to see how feeble and dejected she is. None of the doctors have been able to discover the cause of

her malady. But my mother and I know what it is. You, too, may have guessed it. The wound from which she is suffering, and which will finally kill her, is in the heart. She loved Pierre Laurier, and she cannot be consoled for his death. She confessed it to me before we returned to Paris. And I, wretch that I am, received the avowal of her hopeless passion with distrust, almost with hatred. It seemed to me as if she reproached me with the death of him she mourned, and I turned away with irritation from the poor child, instead of consoling her and mingling my tears with hers. I felt the life of Laurier flow in my veins; he had bequeathed it to me; it belonged to me. I had passed so recently through the anguish of sickness, I was so impressed with the horror of death, that I think I would have committed murder in defense of the life so miraculously saved. And I threw myself like a madman into a life of pleasure to silence my reason, to make my conscience dumb. But I am a coward,—yes, a coward. And the life I lead is the proof of it! Davidoff, if I had but the

power to recall Laurier to life! It would be the salvation of poor Juliette—who knows, perhaps mine also. Yes, if I saw Laurier alive, I should recover confidence in my own strength, and I should cease to believe in the supernatural aid which, whatever you may think, has sustained me up to the present. I should then have the proof that I could live as others live. Or if not, the slender flame of life would be extinguished, and then I should enjoy rest, tranquillity, oblivion. Ah, it would be delightful! For I am weary of it all,—yes, weary!”

Jacques heaved a sigh, and his head sank upon his breast. A shudder ran through him, and his forehead was bathed in perspiration. The Russian observed him with compassionate attention.

“You are ill, Jacques,” he said. “The sea-breeze is chilly; you must not stay here.”

“What does it matter?” answered the young man with indifference. “Neither the cold nor the heat can affect me. I feel a great relief at having told you what you have just heard. I

am a poor creature, and for a long time past I have been the victim of evil influences, which I do not know how to overcome."

"Very well, then, if you are aware of your fault do not persist in it. You told me a moment since that your mother is unhappy and your sister ill on your account. Let us leave this place to-morrow, and return to Paris. Let us go to them. You will console your mother and I will take care of your sister. Your presence will do them both good—not to speak of the benefit you yourself will derive from your visit. After your act of confession, make an act of reparation! Are you a man, and do you wish to behave like a man?"

Jacques seemed disturbed by the plainness of the doctor's proposition. His features were contracted. The sole thought of leaving Clemence agitated him, afraid as he was of the way in which she should spend her time during his absence.

"Is it then necessary that we should go to-morrow?" he said. "Can we not defer our



departure for a few days? I want time to get ready."

"No!" replied Davidoff, brusquely. "If we put it off you will not go. To-morrow, or I will never again speak to you, or recognize you as a friend."

As the young man still hesitated,—

"Why do you hesitate?" he asked. "Are you not a free agent, or must you ask permission to go away? Has it come to that? That would be worse than I had supposed."

"You are mistaken," cried Jacques, "and I will give you the proof of it. Till to-morrow, then."

"Without fail? Without any putting off or making excuses?"

"Count upon me."

"Very well. Let us retire, then, so as to be ready for the morning."

They passed through the Casino out into the air. Before the railing a carriage was in attendance. They awakened the coachman, who was fast asleep upon his seat, and entered the vehicle after Jacques had given orders to stop

at the entrance to the town. They rolled slowly through the sleeping streets. They were both silent, meditating on the engagement they had just made. The stopping of the carriage drew them from their reflections. They were now on the quay before the harbor. A hundred yards away, fastened by a cable to the land, the beautiful white yacht lay at anchor. The doctor alighted from the carriage, and once more pressing Jacques's hand in his, as if to give him strength, said :

"Courage! Good-night. I will call for you in the morning—it is on my way."

"No, no," said Jacques quickly. "Spare yourself the trouble; we will meet at the station."

"Be it so—an hour, then, before the train starts we will dine together at the buffet."

They separated, and the carriage drove off in the direction of Deauville. The doctor, crossing to the yacht, sprang on board.

Toward nine o'clock in the morning Davidoff was wakened from his sleep by a hand laid upon his shoulder. He opened his eyes:

Count Woreseff stood before him. Through the porthole of the cabin could be seen the blue sky, and the rays of the sun, reflected from the undulating surface of the water, played capriciously on the maplewood partition.

"You have slept soundly this morning," said the Russian nobleman with a smile. "This is the second time I have tried to waken you."

"What is the matter, my dear Count? Is any one ill on board?" cried the doctor.

"Happily, no. I only wanted to know what your plans for the day were, before giving my orders. I have a fancy to go to Cherbourg. Would you like to go?"

"Excuse me, my dear Count," answered the doctor, "but I am going to Paris for a few days, if you have no objection to interpose."

"None whatever. Please yourself. But you see how right I was in speaking to you. What would you have said if we were out at sea when you awoke?"

"You do not know how serious the conse-

quences might have been if such a thing had happened," answered Davidoff.

"Well, get up. When I have set you on shore I shall put out to sea, and on your return here you will find me in the same place. But what takes you to Paris, where it is so warm, when it is so delightfully cool here?"

"A love-affair," responded the doctor seriously. "A poor young man whom I am trying to separate from a coquette, who—"

"Say at once a woman," interrupted the Count; "that will be shorter and express the same thing. My dear fellow, trust a man who has been made frightfully unhappy by them, there is only one system to adopt with women,—that which the Orientals have adopted—slavery pure and simple. Tell your friend this from me."

"To tell it to him is easy enough: the difficulty is to make him believe it. He has indeed arrived at your system of slavery, only it is he who is the slave!"

"Poor devil!—Good luck to you, then, Davidoff."

The Count lighted a cigarette, pressed his friend's hand, and left the cabin. An hour later the yacht was steaming out to sea.

On reaching the railway station the doctor found it vacant. The train was not to leave for some time yet. He went into the waiting-room; there was no one there. In the dining-room the woman at the desk was yawning over yesterday's paper. A commercial traveler, his box of samples on the floor beside him, was taking an appetizer. Davidoff went out and walked slowly in the sunshine, looking around to see if Jacques were coming. At the end of twenty minutes he grew impatient, and walked in the direction of Clemence's house at Deauville. As he went on he thought to himself:

"What does this delay mean? Has he given up the thought of accompanying me? What new idea has taken possession of him? Yet he appeared to be in earnest yesterday. But he has seen that accursed woman again, and all his good resolutions have vanished. Who knows? perhaps he has told her of our interview, making a merit of his treachery. In the state



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"GIVE HER THIS CARD AND ASK HER IF SHE WILL RECEIVE ME."

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of impatience in which he is, anything is possible."

The doctor, thus soliloquizing, had now reached the house. He raised his eyes to the windows. They were wide open. In the courtyard a groom was washing a victoria, rapidly turning round the wheels, whose wet spokes sparkled in the sunlight.

"I must know, in any case, what to count upon," he said.

And he deliberately mounted the steps leading to the terrace, and entered the hall.

A servant came toward him.

"M. Jacques de Vignes?" the doctor asked.

"M. de Vignes is not here," answered the servant.

"Is he expected to return?"

"I do not know."

"Is Mme. Villa at home?"

"Madame is in the conservatory."

"Give her this card and ask her if she will receive me."

The servant withdrew. The doctor took a few steps in the hall, letting his gaze dwell



absently on the furniture of sculptured oak, the jardinières filled with flowers, the faïence plaques fastened to the walls, and the large Chinese porcelain jar filled with parasols of various colors and with canes of different kinds of woods. "Clemence may give me a useful hint," he was saying to himself. "I am going to beard the lion in his den. Bah! I am not afraid of her. She devours only those who are willing to be her prey."

A portière was drawn aside and the servant reappeared.

"If Monsieur will follow me—" he said.

They crossed a drawing-room and a boudoir, and stopped before a glass door that led into the conservatory. The servant stepped aside to allow Davidoff to pass. Along a little path, bordered with lycopods, which wound among palm trees, dates, and acacias, Clemence, dressed in a rose-colored foulard silk, fastened around the waist by a girdle of chased silver set with garnets, a little watering-pot in her hand, advanced smilingly to meet him.

"Good-day, doctor," she said. "What happy chance brings you here?"

With a graceful gesture she showed him her hand, blackened with earth, and continued gayly:

"I am the physician of the flowers. I was just holding a consultation respecting these plants."

"Are they doing well?"

"Not so badly, thanks."

She showed him her watering-pot. "I have just been giving them some tisane," she added. "But to what am I indebted for the pleasure of your visit?"

"May I not have come simply to see you?"

She looked at him coldly.

"You are very amiable. I am obliged for your politeness, but I know you. You are not a lady's man. If you come to see me it is because you have some serious reason for it."

"Well, then, I have a reason. I had an appointment with Jacques this morning, which he failed to keep. I feared he might be ill—"

"Ah!" interrupted Clemence, with a thoughtful air.

She went toward a little bridge on which were an iron table and some chairs, and seating herself, said:

"Ill! He is so indeed!"

And tapping her forehead with her finger, "Ill here, especially," she added.

As Davidoff remained silent, curious to learn the secret of this friendship which he deemed perilous to Jacques, she resumed:

"He made a terrible scene, this morning, without any reason whatever. A scrap of a letter, which he saw lying on my table, was the cause of it all. As if I could not have concealed it if I had wished. But he was in a jealous mood. He scolded, he threatened, he wept. Yes, he wept. What stupidity! A man who weeps does not move me at all. He only makes me think him ridiculous."

"You do not love him, then?"

"I do not love him as I did six months ago. Such an affection is delightful, but of course it cannot last."

"Oh, I know you are a practical woman."

"You say that as a sarcasm. I accept it as a compliment. Yes, I am a practical woman, and I am proud of it. Jacques has behaved very well toward me, but he gambles, and for some time past he has been losing. This sours his temper. He torments me, and he torments himself. Why should I bear this, I ask you? If I were tired of him, could I not show him the door? If he is tired of me, can he not remain away? But in that case let us do so decently and without making a scene."

"Would it not be well to tell him so?"

"If you wish."

"But where can I see him?"

"Here."

"He had not left the house, then, as the servant told me?"

"Not at all. Go and give him a lecture."

"I came here for that purpose."

"Then you are doubly welcome. Do you wish me to take you to him?"

"It would be very amiable on your part to do so."

She rose with a laugh, and said :

"Ah, there is no one like me for amiability !"

"That is what they tell me."

"They are very indiscreet."

"And why so? That is the way good reputations are established."

They crossed the drawing-room.

"You are with Woreseff on his yacht?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Does he still play the rôle of Sultan, the dear Count?"

"Still."

"There is a man who knows how to live."

"Perfectly."

They had reached the first landing. She stopped, and pointing to a door,—

"Jacques is in there," she said.

The actress, standing here in her rose-colored gown, with her fresh complexion and her brilliant eyes, the light falling on her from a window that overlooked the sea, was so beautiful that Davidoff paused an instant to look at her. He could understand the irresistible spell

wielded by this fascinating and feline creature. He could understand the pleasure a man might feel in allowing himself to be torn by these polished, sharp, and delicate claws. In her he saw the sphynx who devours those who are bold enough to attempt to solve the eternal riddle she propounded. His eyes expressed his thoughts so clearly that Clemence said with a smile:

"What would you have? One must protect one's-self."

And she ran lightly downstairs. Davidoff knocked, and a voice responded, "Come in."

He turned the knob and opened the door, and beside the open window, buried in the depths of a large sofa, he saw Jacques, his eyes hollow, his lips livid. As he recognized the doctor the young man grew a shade paler and his brow clouded. He rose, and going toward his visitor slowly stretched out his hand.

"You are angry with me," he said.

"A little."

"Only a little? I do not deserve so much indulgence. I told you last night that I was a

coward. Well, you have received the proof of it soon enough."

He spoke through his clinched teeth, with a slight contraction of the features. Davidoff, whom he inspired with pity, sat down beside him and said affectionately:

"What has happened since we parted to prevent you keeping your engagement with me? It ought to have been a pleasant one to keep."

"Can anything be pleasant to me?" responded Jacques, in a low voice. "All that I do is hateful and miserable. An evil spirit has taken possession of me, and inspires me with the most fatal thoughts."

"Resist it," returned the doctor. "You allowed yourself to yield to my influence a few hours ago; do so again. Take your hat and overcoat and follow me. There is still time."

"No," answered Jacques, with determination. "I shall not leave this."

"What Clemence has told me, then, is true?"

"Ah, you have seen her? And she complained of me, did she not? The wretch! It

is she who is the cause of all my misery. Yes, she is destroying me, she is killing me. It would be impossible to conceive what she makes me suffer. I know not what madness she has inspired me with. Can you understand that I should be jealous of her? This morning we had a frightful scene. She forbade me the house, and I am here still! I am here still! And why? Because I cannot live without her. Because I would sue for her smiles on my knees if it were necessary!"

"Make the effort to keep away from her for a few days."

"No, no, that would be impossible. What a void in my existence if she should pass out of it. No! I have sacrificed everything for this woman. I have made everything yield to my love for her. To give her up now would be to end everything."

He buried his face in his hands and was silent for a few moments; then in an accent of desperation :

"When I am at the end of my resources," he said, "then I will see her no more. Ah, that



day is not far off, for luck is against me. But I keep on playing although I know perfectly well what the end must be. You see it is not easy to preach to me, for I am beforehand with you. Abandon me to my fate, my friend. I am not worth the efforts you would make to save me."

Davidoff had listened to Jacques's words with a pang at his heart, studying with mingled curiosity and compassion this pitiable form of insanity. He was familiar with the feeling which had led so many men to madness or suicide. He knew it was made up of the intoxication of the senses, the exasperation of wounded vanity, and a sort of mysterious terror which takes possession of those who, habituated to the tumult of a feverish existence, see themselves condemned suddenly to a life of isolation and silence. The transition was like passing from the gayety of a ball-room to the stillness of a Trappist monastery. Only a strong soul and a steady head could bear it with calmness.

"Come with me," said the doctor to Jacques.

"I give you my word that I will not quit you until you are cured, mentally and physically."

Jacques burst into a fit of nervous laughter that sounded harsh and painful in the doctor's ears.

"No, no, abandon me to my fate," he cried. "I do not want to be cured! I am already sentenced, and nothing can change the decrees of fate. I have lived only for happiness. Anguish and misery are my doom!"

He lowered his voice as if with sudden terror.

"You know well it is not I who act, who speak, who suffer, and who complain. There is another within me who is leading me on to my fate. Even if I wished to stop myself I could not do so. Ah, I feel this implacable soul agitating itself furiously. It is jealous! It takes vengeance of me on myself. So long as it inhabits my body I must suffer. On the day on which I shall be delivered from it—"

Davidoff interrupted Jacques with a quick gesture; he knitted his brow and was on the point of saying: "You are mad! Laurier has

disappeared, it is true, but Laurier is still alive. I humored your fancy because I had a conviction that only faith would give you back the strength to live. But since you have reached such a state of hallucination as to make your recovered health the cause of your ruin, it is my duty to declare the truth to you."

One thought, however, made him pause. "He will not believe me!" he said to himself. "I must show him his friend restored to mental health in order to prove to him that he himself may recover his sanity." He turned toward the young man and said very gently:

"Since you do not wish to accompany me to Paris I will go alone, then. I shall see your mother and sister there."

A shadow passed over Jacques's face, and his eyes shone as if moist with tears.

"Thanks," he said in a choking voice; "try to make them forgive me the evil I have done them. They are so good, so affectionate!"

He rose, and a quick shudder passed through his frame.

"Oh, I am a wretch!" he cried. "It would be better for me to be dead!"

At this moment the sound of a clear voice calling "Jacques!" in the garden below, was heard.

He advanced hastily to the window. Clemence was gathering roses. She saw him, and cried gayly:

"Well, is your sulking over? The air is delightful. Come down, and we will go to Villers to breakfast."

Jacques turned to Davidoff, and cried in agitation:

"She calls me, you see. She is waiting for me. She is not so bad as I said. She has terrible moments, it is true, but at heart she loves me. Come, my friend."

He drew Davidoff toward the stairs. They went down into the hall. There Jacques pressed the doctor's hand tightly, and as if impatient to be alone with Clemence said:

"Adieu. Once more, pardon me. Reassure my mother and cure my sister—Ah, that above all! Poor child! Adieu."

And with rapid steps he hurried toward the garden where his pitiless tyrant awaited him. Davidoff, already in the street, strode quickly away.

Through an opening to the shore he caught a glimpse of the yacht, which was steaming out to sea, leaving in its wake a trail of black smoke.

"I am free," he cried; "let me profit by it."

He went to the telegraph office, took a sheet of paper, and standing at the desk wrote these words:

"PIERRE LAURIER, *Care of Monsieur le Curé de Torrevicchio, Corsica:*

"Return at once. Your presence has become indispensable. When you arrive here wait for nothing, but join me immediately at the Grand Hotel. DAVIDOFF."

He gave the telegram to the clerk, paid for it, and went out murmuring:

"If I do not succeed in saving the brother, I shall at least try to save the sister." And he took the train for Paris.

## VI.

**D**AVIDOFF'S telegram was delivered to Pierre Laurier on the very day of Agostino's marriage with the daughter of a well-to-do farmer of San Pellegrino. The young sailor had prospered in his trading expeditions to the Mediterranean ports, and he brought a fortune of six thousand francs to his bride. The latter, a rosy brunette of sixteen from the mountains, had a house and some olive groves of her own. The young people had loved each other for a year past, and on the understanding that Agostino was to give up his seafaring life the marriage had now been celebrated.

On emerging from the church of San Pellegrino the newly-married pair were greeted by a succession of shots fired in their honor. One might have thought from the noise that the villagers were engaged in a vendetta and were trying to exterminate each other; vivas broke forth from the guests. Every face beamed

with joy, and the bright sunshine, the heat and the smell of the powder seemed to produce a general feeling of intoxication.

Pierre, giving his arm to the little Marietta, whose companion he had been in the church, followed with delighted eyes every detail of the animated and novel scene, dreaming already of the beautiful picture he would paint of it, and which has since become so famous under the title of "A Corsican Marriage."

His heart was at peace, and his mind had recovered its balance. Not a shadow darkened his soul. He was completely absorbed in the contemplation of the happiness of these people whom he loved, and in the simplicity and tranquillity of whose patriarchal life he had been able to forget his unworthy passion and to regain the dignity of his manhood. The wedding guests now proceeded to the house of the bride's father, there to partake of the banquet set forth in honor of the newly-married pair. As they assembled in the grounds, a little boy, who served the good curé of Torrevicchio as an acolyte, pushed through the crowd and run-

ning up to the venerable priest, handed him a blue envelope which had just been left at the vicarage. To cover the distance between Torrevecchio and San Pellegrino, the little fellow, with his mountaineer's legs, had taken only an hour. He arrived breathless, his face covered with dust and perspiration.

The curé read the address on the envelope and then handed it to Pierre, saying affectionately:

"Here, my dear child, this is for you."

A group had already formed around the young man, who, with clouded brow and lips tightly drawn, held within his fingers the despatch he had received, without power to open it.

"What is it?" asked Agostino anxiously.

"That blue paper," said the boy, "which was brought a little while ago from Bastia by the postman. He made a special trip with it as it seemed to be urgent, so Maddalena, the servant of M. le Curé, said to me, 'Run like a flash; do not stop until you have given it to Monsieur. Something serious must have happened, for in three years or more there has not



come to Torrevecchio a paper like that!" So I set out without a moment's delay, and here I am."

As he spoke, he wiped off with the back of his hand the perspiration which was running down his face, showing his white teeth in a broad smile of delight at having performed his mission so successfully.

"You are going to drink a glass of Tollano and to eat a morsel of bread with us, Jacopo," said Agostino. He pushed the child toward his father-in-law, and then, greatly troubled by the uneasiness which Pierre's face betrayed, he said to him anxiously:

"What is the matter?"

Pierre opened the envelope slowly, unfolded the telegram, and read the imperious summons addressed to him by his friend. He turned pale and his brow clouded. His heart suddenly seemed to contract.

"Is there any bad news?" asked Agostino.

"No," returned the painter, "at least I hope not. But I must leave you. I must go at once to Paris."

"Leave us! And now!" cried the bridegroom sorrowfully. "Wait at least until to-morrow."

"If they had told you when the sea was between you that your sweetheart was ill and might die during your absence," gravely answered Pierre, "would you have delayed going to her?"

Agostino pressed his preserver's hand with emotion and tears filled his eyes.

"No, you are right," he said. "But you must know how much your departure will grieve us."

Pierre drew the young man aside, and there speaking to him with a sudden emotion, which threw a new light on his friend's character and past life for Agostino, said:

"There is no need to cast a gloom over the feast. From here to Torrevecchio by the high-road is a matter of twelve miles. I can hire a carriage at the inn, and go there alone. Once I am on the other side of the mountain, you will explain my absence to your guests, and thank each one of those present for the cordial

reception they gave me when I came here. I shall never forget the time I have spent among you. I was grievously ill, both in heart and mind. In the peaceful and laborious existence I have led here I have forgotten the sorrows that I thought were incurable, and it is to you I owe all this—to your mother who has been so good to me, to your little sister who has so often brought to my mind by her naïve and winning grace the young girl who is waiting for me now; and finally to you, my brave fellow, to save whose life I gave up my intention of putting an end to my own when, driven to despair, I was on the point of doing so. You have restored me to myself. It is for your sake that I feel myself still bound to humanity. No! I shall never forget you, and whether in sadness or in joy, my thoughts will often recur to you.”

Agostino could scarcely restrain his tears at these words, and, more affected by Pierre's departure than he would have been by that of some member of his own family, he began to sob, while the wedding guests, giving them-

selves up to merriment, were laughing, singing, and shouting in the garden. Pierre, after he had in some measure succeeded in calming the young man's grief, said quietly:

"And now, listen to me. It is necessary that I should reach Paris at the earliest possible moment. When does the next boat leave Bastia, and where does it stop?"

"There is a steamer of the Morelli line leaving for Marseilles on Tuesday," answered Agostino. "By going to town to-night you can engage your passage on her, and to-morrow at daybreak you will be out at sea. From Bastia to Marseilles there are thirty hours."

"In three days, then," said Pierre, "I shall be in Paris. From there, my dear Agostino, you must allow me to send some tokens of remembrance to your dear ones. You need have no scruples in the matter. I have lived here with you, wearing the garb of a peasant, almost a year, but I am not poor. Put away your Corsican pride; from your brother your mother, your sister, or your wife may accept anything. Do not forget me, and be assured

that you shall one day see me again. When I return to your island, perhaps, if Heaven so far favors me, it will not be alone. Embrace me, and adieu until then!"

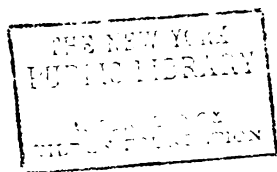
The two men embraced each other as on the night on which they were tossed about by the engulfing waves under the pale light of the moon; and when they separated it was with mingled smiles and tears.

Half an hour later, Pierre was driving rapidly toward Torrevicchio, and on the same evening, after packing up his pictures and sketches, arrived at Bastia. He alighted at the inn where he had passed his first night on Corsican soil, went to engage his passage on board the steamer, and then entered a clothier's, where he replaced his velveteen garments by a complete suit of blue cloth which became him very well.

When he found himself dressed again, after the unrestraint of so many months, in close-fitting waistcoat and coat, he gave a sigh. It seemed to him that he ceased to be the free and active Pierre Laurier who had worked so joyfully ten hours a day in the open air, inhal-



**"WHEN HE FOUND HIMSELF DRESSED AGAIN . . . IN  
CLOSE-FITTING WAISTCOAT AND COAT,  
HE GAVE A SIGH."**



ing the invigorating odors of juniper and fir-tree, and that he became once more the Pierre Laurier of the past, who, cursing his art and despairing of the future, spent his hours between the boudoir of a coquette and the gambling saloon of the club.

He raised his eyes. Night was falling, but behind the chestnut groves, bathing in its pallid light the frowning rocks, the moon shone, like a silver crescent in the sky. The forest breeze, warm and fragrant, passed over the young man's brow, soft as the caressing touch of a wing. He looked at the sea, which rolled, profound and calm, at his feet, and murmured: "You may bear me away. I fear neither you nor those from whom you separate me." His transitory discontent passed away, and at this moment, when he was about to take the supreme step that was to decide his fate, he found himself master of his thoughts and of his feelings.

No emotion stirred his heart at the thought of the woman he had so passionately loved. He dared to evoke her image. He saw her



with her low brow crowned with its raven tresses; her beautiful eyes with their long lashes, her intoxicating glance,—but he remained indifferent and disdainful. He loved her no longer, all was over; the charm had ceased; the philter was powerless. He had recovered possession of himself, and his heart, freed from its bondage, was once more worthy of a good woman's acceptance. And tears of emotion came to Laurier's eyes. His trembling lips murmured a confession of love, and his whole being reached through space toward the adored object.

On the following day at nine o'clock the boat sailed. Pierre again saw the dock beside which the *Saint Laurent* lay at anchor, while he was painting its figurehead of carved wood, the mole, the bastion of the Dragon, and, in succession, Cape Corso, Giraglia, and the Italian coast. On board the boat, which sailed rapidly, he retraced the route taken by the little smuggling vessel.

As they drew nearer the French coast he asked himself with growing uneasiness what

could be the cause of Davidoff's hasty summons. A vague disquietude took possession of him, and he began to fear that some misfortune had happened. To whom? The words of the letter written to him at Torrevecchio by the doctor, recurred to him: "The report that you had been drowned, came very near causing the death of one closely connected with Jacques." These words had changed everything in his life. Was this person Juliette, and was she now in danger? Should he arrive only in time to see her, in whom his only hope now lay, expire? But the letter contained these words also: "You passed close to happiness without knowing it, but there is still time for you to regain it." Was this happiness going to escape him anew? Was it not probable that this young girl, who was so beautiful, was loved, and that another, during his absence, had succeeded in curing the wound her heart had received?

A profound sadness took possession of Pierre, at the thought that this last throw upon which he had staked his happiness should

lose. A feeling of mental lassitude overpowered him, and he felt that it would be a mortal blow for him, should this prove to be the case. He was consumed by impatience to learn the truth. On board the vessel, as its keel cleaved the blue waters, he longed for some means of corresponding with Davidoff. He stretched out his hands toward the shore, as if the reassuring news he desired were there awaiting him. He envied the albatross its swift wings as it sailed in its melancholy flight through the blue air. He walked the deck nervously, as if his impatience could lend added speed to the motion of the vessel.

He could not sleep, and he remained on deck, his gaze fixed on the horizon. They passed in succession Genoa, Monaco, Nice, Antibes, and Toulon; sailing along this enchanting coast, bordered down to the water's edge with gardens on whose sands of gold the waves die languorously away. His heart beat quickly as he saw the Chateau d'If looming darkly in the distance, its lights gleaming through the night like eyes looking into

immensity. He had but little baggage, and on arriving at Marseilles he gave it to a street porter, and crossing the gangway hastily, took a carriage and drove to the railway station. He paused not an instant; his only thought was to reach his destination as soon as possible. The express was to leave at half-past eleven, and he had still an hour at his disposal. He went to the telegraph office and sent the following despatch to Davidoff: "Arrived in Marseilles: will be in Paris to-morrow evening at six."

When he saw the message pass from the hands of the clerk to those of the operator he felt a sense of relief, as if some part of himself had already gone on in advance. He went to the restaurant, where he breakfasted, though without an appetite, to kill time. The gates being at last opened and the train ready to start, he installed himself in a compartment and gave himself up with a new sense of delight to the pleasure of being rapidly borne through space. Buried in a corner of the carriage, his eyes closed although he was not

asleep, he remained motionless, counting as they passed them the stations which still separated him from the end of his journey, as a prisoner counts on the calendar the days which still separate him from liberty.

Toward dawn, however, he grew exhausted and fell into a doze. For two days and nights he had not slept. When he awoke he saw with delight that he had gained upon time during his sleep, for it was broad daylight, and the train was approaching Mâcon. Before him, bathed in sunshine, stretched on either hand the rich and smiling fields of Burgundy. Pierre felt as if he had almost reached his journey's end. He found himself again in the midst of scenery which, for a year, he had not seen. No longer olives, firs, and cactus, growing among the sparse and yellow vegetation, met his gaze; no longer reddish rocks and foaming torrents; no longer shepherds armed with guns watching from some eminence with a proud and serious air their scanty flock or their unruly goats at pasture. Instead he saw peasants, at once stout and active, guiding the

plow, drawn by large white oxen, yoked in pairs, along the brown furrows; fields covered with crops, vines bending under their load of grapes, forests of a vivid green traversed by grassy paths leading into cool, green glades. It was the severe beauty of the central provinces of France, not the soft and radiant beauty of Provence or the wild grandeur of Corsica.

Space fled before them: the train passed swiftly by hillsides, valleys, and rivers, and Pierre gave himself up more and more to his own thoughts. He fell into an uneasy reverie, in which he asked himself with a vain persistence what it was that had caused Davidoff to recall him so suddenly; and a feverish agitation seized him as they approached Paris. He consulted his watch more than twenty times between the great city and Melun. Passing the fortifications he stood up preparing already to leave the train. At last the engine, whistling shrilly, slowed up, the turnplates sounded, and the train stopped at the station.

Pierre, standing on the platform ready to

leave the train, leaped to the ground and was caught in the embrace of two strong arms. He raised his eyes, recognized Davidoff, uttered a cry of joy, and, pressing in his turn the hand of his faithful friend, drew him aside.

"Well?" he cried, putting all his eagerness into this one question.

"Calm yourself," said the Russian, who understood Laurier's anxiety. "Juliette is in no present danger."

Pierre breathed a profound sigh as if his heart had been relieved from a heavy weight.

"And Jacques?" he asked.

"Ah! Jacques!" responded Davidoff. "It is he, more than any one else, who gives me cause for uneasiness. But let us not remain here. We are attracting notice."

He put his arm through the painter's and drew him away through the crowd now hurrying out of the station.

"What luggage have you?" he asked.

"This valise and a box which is in the wagon."

"Come, we will have the trunk taken to the hotel. For you must accompany me. I shall not leave you. Instead of waiting for you as I had said I would in my dispatch, I preferred coming to meet you. I feared some indiscretion on your part. Do you know that if Mlle. de Vignes were to see you appear suddenly before her the shock might prove fatal to her in her present condition?"

They drove along the boulevard conversing together, and Laurier was too confused to take in fully all there was to see and hear. The bustle of Paris, after leaving the train in which for twenty hours he had been shaken, succeeding the profound calm and retirement of his life at Torrevecchio, fevered his brain, dazzled his eyes, and deafened his ears. He was obliged to make an effort in order to listen to and understand Davidoff. He felt weary in body and over-excited in mind.

"My journey has tired me greatly," he said, "and yet I feel that I cannot rest—"

"You have been living for the past three days on your nerves," returned the doctor. "I



am going to set you right again. Trust to me. If I never had patients more difficult to cure than you—"

The carriage rolled into the courtyard of the Grand Hotel. They alighted, and followed by a boy carrying Laurier's valise ascended to Davidoff's apartment. Laurier's chamber was separated from the Russian's by a parlor. Left alone they examined each other silently for an instant: then the doctor, pointing out a seat to his friend, said:

"Sit down; we will dine here and talk at the same time, and if you are reasonable I may do something for you this very evening."

Pierre's eyes lighted up. "What?" he asked. "Will you permit me to see her?"

Davidoff laughed.

"You are at least frank," he said. "To see her! It seems, then, she is the only subject you and I have to talk about! Well, you are right, and it was of her I was going to speak. Since the beginning of the week I have been here, and I have gradually accustomed her to the thought of your reappearance. In the

depths of her heart she has mourned you as dead for many months past. From the first words spoken by me, casting the shadow of a doubt on your death, she has revived, but in a manner to terrify her mother and myself. A violent fever has taken possession of her. Her weakness was so great! She has been fading slowly ever since your disappearance, growing paler and paler every day, like a flower cankered at the heart. As to her brother—but it is better to speak only of her.”

“Is the news you have to give me of Jacques, then, so painful?”

“Heart-breaking, morally and physically. This week, spurred on by an imperious need for money, he put for sale the property belonging jointly to his mother, his sister, and himself. The remonstrances of the notary and the entreaties of Mme. de Vignes were alike useless. He desires to realize the money, no matter at what cost, without troubling himself about the loss that must result from this hasty sale. He is insane, and his insanity has taken a dangerous form.”

"And who or what has been the cause of this insanity?" asked Pierre.

"Love. A woman has been the ruin of this unhappy man, whose moral nature was never strong."

"And is this woman so fascinating that he cannot be turned away from her; has she so powerful an influence over him that he cannot be torn from her?"

"She is the most fascinating, the most dangerous of women. If I were to name her to you—"

At these words Pierre turned pale; he looked eagerly at Davidoff, the name upon his lips which he divined the doctor was about to pronounce, when the latter, smiling bitterly and looking at the painter as if he would pierce the inmost recesses of his soul, said:

"Ah, you have understood me. Yes, it is into the hands of Clemence that Jacques has fallen. She loved him ardently, he loved her in return—well, as men love her. At the end of six months she has grown cold as marble, he is more passionately in love than ever. But

why should I seek to describe the condition of his mind to you? To understand it you have only to recall your own feelings."

Laurier remained silent and motionless, his head sunk upon his breast, and the Russian resumed with force:

"He adores her, do you understand, Pierre? He lives only for her."

The painter raised his head and exclaimed in compassionate accents:

"Unhappy man! For such a woman, to have given up everything, to have forgotten every duty! But he is to be pitied rather than blamed; she has such dangerous power."

At these words Davidoff's countenance cleared up; his eyes sparkled with joy: he went to his friend, and with affected irony said:

"So, then, there is no feeling in your heart for Jacques but one of pity."

"And what other feeling should I have for him?" answered Pierre. "Ought I to blame him after showing myself weaker and more culpable than he? No, I can only pity him!"

Davidoff took Pierre's hand in his and shook it vigorously.

"And you feel no thrill of emotion at the recollection of the old love, no return of your former tenderness, no feeling of anger against your friend?" he said.

"So this is what you feared?" said Laurier, a flush mounting to his pale face. "You doubted that I was completely cured of my insensate passion, and you wished to put me to the proof? Oh, do not be afraid: speak plainly. You doubted me?"

"Yes," returned Davidoff, with firmness. "I desired to know whether unconsciously—"

"Ah!" cried Pierre, "question me then, look into the secret recesses of my heart. You will find there no other feeling than one of bitter regret for my folly and the ardent desire to atone for it. If I had not judged myself worthy of a pure affection and capable of responding to it by a constant love, you would never have seen me again. Fear nothing on my account, Davidoff. The Pierre Laurier you know is dead—killed on a tempestuous night,

and the man you see before you, though he has the same features, fortunately has not the same heart!"

"That's right," cried Davidoff gayly. "Ah, a heavy weight has been removed from my conscience. If I had not been able to count upon you with certainty I do not know how I could have carried through my undertaking. It is surrounded on all sides by difficulties and anxieties. It will be necessary for you to meet Clemence—"

"If it is absolutely necessary," returned Pierre, "I will make the effort, but I shall do it with great reluctance."

"No doubt it will be with greater reluctance than in former days," answered the Russian with a smile. "But we must try and save Jacques from her clutches, and nothing less than your intervention will enable us to succeed. Let us leave that for the future, however, and occupy ourselves with the present. Let us speak of Mlle. de Vignes."

Pierre's brow cleared. At this moment dinner was served, and the two friends seated

themselves at table and spent the next hour in exchanging confidences.

Pierre gave an account of his sojourn at Torrevecchio to the doctor, and the latter recounted to the painter all that had taken place during his absence. In this way they were able to arrive at the conviction, Davidoff that Laurier was, as he affirmed, radically cured of his fatal passion, and Laurier that Davidoff, in recalling him as hastily as he had done, had acted with as much wisdom as decision. Toward nine o'clock they left the hotel and set out for the house of Mme. de Vignes. In the boulevard, in the mild air of the summer night, Pierre felt his heart swell with joy and hope. He raised his eyes to heaven with a feeling of repentance at having so insanely despaired of happiness.

During the past few days Mme. de Vignes, forewarned by Davidoff, had seen the future, which had appeared to her so dark, lighted up by a faint ray of hope. The certainty that Pierre Laurier lived, the positiveness with which Davidoff affirmed that the painter loved

Juliette, and loved only her, had given the mother some little consolation. In the midst of the misfortunes which overwhelmed her, with everything to fear from her son, and everything to fear for her daughter, the possibility of seeing Juliette once more restored to health and tranquillity was a source of sweet satisfaction to her. What were pecuniary cares compared to the anxieties caused by her daughter's increasing weakness and dejection? Davidoff had been welcomed as a savior. Communicating his news to Juliette with wise precaution, he had planted at first a seed of hope in her mind which had found fertile soil. By degrees the seed cast roots which spread vigorously; and now the flower, ready to bloom, awaited only a last ray of sunshine. Since the beginning of the week Juliette, without proof, without any other plausible reason than the ardent desire to see the miracle she hoped for wrought, had become convinced that Pierre was living.

The "*on dit*" of Davidoff had been seized on with avidity by this young heart. Why



should not Pierre have been rescued from the waves, as was said, and taken on board a passing trading-vessel bound for Corsica, where he had been seen by persons who declared they had recognized him? What was there strange in his remaining all these months hidden from his friends, ashamed perhaps of not having carried into effect the suicidal purpose which he had announced? And was it not natural that he should leave the de Vignes in ignorance of his being alive? All this was admissible. And the young girl was so eager to believe it that she would have thought still stranger things likely.

Each day Davidoff, pursuing the same course, gave Juliette an account of the results of the investigations he told her he was making. And each day he saw this benumbed and frozen heart slowly reawakening to life. It was a delightful spectacle to the doctor to see it timidly putting forth new buds. Juliette hoped, but with fear and trembling, and at times she would stop short suddenly on the road whither her imagination would lead her.

What if, after indulging in these dreams, she should have to fall back again into her former state of despair? What if the reports they had heard should prove untrue, and Pierre had not been rescued?

Her heart was tortured by these conflicting hopes and fears. It seemed to her impossible that death should have snatched away in an instant this young man so full of life and vigor. She recalled to mind what her brother had said to her at Beaulieu: "His body has not been recovered." She had not at the time accepted these words as a ground for hope. But now was it not evident that if the sea had not cast his body back upon the shore, it was because he had been saved from its treacherous waves, and that he still lived? This hope was now so deeply rooted in her heart that to tear it thence nothing less than positive proof would have sufficed. For her who loved him, it would be necessary to see Pierre dead in order to believe that he no longer lived.

This very morning Davidoff had ventured to say to Juliette:

"I dined yesterday with some people who met our friend in Italy and spoke to him. We may expect to see him make his appearance one of these days."

She looked fixedly at the doctor for a few moments, and then said:

"Why do you not tell me everything? Are you afraid of the effect my joy would have upon me? You are wrong. I am certain now that he lives. I saw him last night in my dreams. He was in a church, a poor village church, and he was painting a sacred picture. His face was sad—sad, and from time to time a tear rolled down his cheek. I had a conviction that he was thinking of me. I wished to cry out, 'Pierre, enough of sorrow, enough of separation. Come back; we are waiting for you, and it would make us so happy to welcome you.' But a sort of mist arose between us, and I could only see him faintly, in vague outline, and I could hear distinctly the noise of the waves, like the surf beating against the rocks at Beaulieu. Then this mist disappeared, like a veil which is torn away, and I saw him

once more clearly. He came toward me, a smile upon his lips. He made a gesture as if to say, 'Have patience: I am coming,' and then I awoke, trembling and exhausted. But I have faith. He is near us—in Paris, perhaps?"

"Can you describe to me the church of which you speak?" asked Davidoff, greatly surprised.

"Yes," returned Juliette. "It stood facing the square of a village. The gateway to it was of red sandstone, surmounted by a sloping roof of brick. The walls were whitewashed, and everything in it was of the humblest description—a few wooden benches, a plain chair, and a very simple altar."

"And the picture Pierre was painting," asked the doctor, "did you see it? Can you remember what it was like?"

"Yes, there was an open grave in it—from which a dead man was rising. I saw in this an omen."

Davidoff shook his head in silence, greatly impressed by this extraordinary revelation. It was evidently he who, by the power of

thought, had made Mlle. de Vignes see the church at Torrevicchio, and the picture of the Resurrection; but the noise of the waves striking the ear of the young girl, at the very hour in which Pierre was on the sea, how explain this?

He remained silent, and despite all Juliette could do gave her no further information. But his attitude, his words, all had announced a coming event. The doctor left the young girl in a state of agitation which he thought favorable to his plans, and took his departure. In the evening when he stopped before Mme. de Vignes's door, accompanied by the man whose presence was so ardently desired, his heart beat violently. He pressed his friend's arm with force, and pointing to the last window of the entresol he said:

"Remain here and keep your eyes fixed on that window. When you see me appear at it, come in, but not before. I am going to prepare the way for you. I am more uneasy than I can tell you."

He entered the house, leaving the painter on

the sidewalk below. Laurier, left thus alone, was seized by an emotion similar to that which he had experienced standing on the rocky point at Torrevecchio, the sea rolling at his feet, when, after receiving Davidoff's letter, he had questioned his own heart to know if he were worthy of Juliette. A solemn emotion took possession of him while he thus waited the moment to present himself to the young girl. He was grave and thoughtful with the sense that he was making an act of reparation. He had none of the impatience, the joyful peace of a convert who is about to abjure his errors, obtain pardon for his sins, and live henceforward in peace with God and man.

He stood leaning against the wall, his eyes fixed on the window, thinking of the scene that was taking place in the darkened apartment within. There was no sign of life; everything was silent. A great calm pervaded the young man's soul. One feeling absorbed every other within him—his love for Juliette. He recalled to mind the timid and innocent love of the young girl, he remembered the sorrows

he had made her suffer, and face to face with himself in the silence of the night, he swore to make her forget them.

At this moment the window was faintly illuminated, and Dr. Davidoff gave the signal for his friend to enter.

Laurier hurried forward and with beating heart mounted the steps. The door was open, he crossed the hall, entered the drawing-room, and standing by her mother's side in front of the chimney-piece he saw Juliette. He paused motionless, his limbs trembling, gazing at her with an unsteady glance.

She seemed to him taller than before, perhaps because she had grown thinner and had lost her color. Her white hands showed delicate and transparent against her black robe. Her eyes, filled with tears, shone with a soft brightness. She smiled, and examined Pierre as Pierre was examining her. She thought he had grown handsomer, with his sunburned face framed by the brown beard he had allowed to grow. She read on his brow traces of what he had suffered, and this compensated her for

something of her own suffering. Her smile ended in tears, and putting her handkerchief quickly to her eyes she sank into an arm-chair and burst into sobs.

Pierre uttered a cry, and rushing toward her threw himself at her feet, entreating her forgiveness. Mme. de Vignes in much alarm hastened to her side, but Davidoff reassured her with a glance. Then the mother and the physician, seeing that the two young people had forgotten everything but themselves, left them to enjoy in freedom the first moments of their happiness.

When they returned they found Pierre and the young girl seated beside each other, her hand clasped in his. Juliette was telling him of her past sorrows. She smiled at the recollection of them now, but Pierre could not hear of them without emotion.

"My friends," said Davidoff to the lovers, "we have kept our promise to you, and you are now happy. This is very well, but even of the best things it is possible to have too much. Mlle. de Vignes is not yet strong enough to



allow of her enjoying anything, even happiness, in excess. She has had enough now for one occasion. Besides, you will have plenty of time to see each other in the future."

But Juliette pleaded with her mother for a quarter of an hour's grace, and Mme. de Vignes had not the courage to cloud, by a refusal, the lovely face which was now radiant with joy for the first time in so many months. She felt that the victory was already gained, and that youth and love had triumphed over death. And the feeling of bitterness which she had cherished against Laurier as the cause of so much unhappiness vanished when she saw the transformation his presence had effected in Juliette.

They sat, then, oblivious of time, listening to the account Pierre gave of his life in the little Corsican hamlet. Juliette already loved Agostino, Marietta, the old mother and the good curé. And the promise made by Pierre to his friends at Torrevecchio to return to see them was mentally renewed by her in the fullness of her heart. It struck midnight before they separated.

"You will not see us to-morrow," said Davidoff to his patient with a smile.

And as her face suddenly clouded,—

"We must not think of you alone, dear child," he said gently. "We have still to perform another cure, more difficult than yours. We start for Trouville to-morrow morning, to see your brother."

In an instant the momentary selfishness, which had caused her to forget everything but her own happiness, disappeared. She remembered the painful position in which she and her mother were placed, and all the clearness of her judgment at once returned to her. She pressed Davidoff's hand, and said to Pierre:

"You are right; go, both of you, and do for my brother what you have done for me! If you succeed you cannot indeed make me more grateful, but you can make me more happy."

Then, taking her lover by the hand, she led him to her mother. Mme. de Vignes opened her arms to the prodigal son, and as Pierre received her kiss, he felt that now indeed he was absolved.



## VII.

THERE was to be a grand breakfast at the house of Clemence on this day, which was the first day of the races. A number of her friends had arrived from Paris the evening before, and the actress, who had met them at the Casino, had then invited them. Among them were Prince Patrizzi, Duverney, a painter of the nude of the modern school, and a wit who still preserved the gay good-humor of his youthful days: Baron Trésorier, a stock-broker and one of the best swordsmen of Paris; Berneville a sportsman who rode like a professional jockey, and who had broken his collarbone seven times riding steeplechases; the Duke de Faucigny, the youngest member of the Chamber of Deputies, an uncompromising legitimist who had strenuously advocated the claims of Don Carlos; Burat, the theatrical lawyer, the possessor of the most biting tongue of any member of the profession, a reg-

ular attendant at first nights, and an ardent collector of paintings; and Selim Nuño, who had come to see his mare run for the Agricultural Sweepstakes, and who concealed his anxiety as to the result under an affected gayety. The women were Andrée de Taillebourg, Mariette de Fontenoy, Laure d'Evreux, and Sophie Viroflay, all beautiful women, dressed to perfection. The party was arranged for the entire day. After breakfasting at Clemence's they were to be driven on Nuño's coach to the race-course. On their return, after making some changes in their toilettes, they were to meet at half-past seven at the Roches-Noires, where Trésorier had invited them to dine. Afterwards they were all to go to the Casino for a dance. Jacques took a turn through the gardens with Patrizzi, while Clemence chatted with Nuño, who had seated himself beside her.

"Do you know that Jacques offers ten to one against Mandragora?" she said. "He has won so much at play during the last few days that he thinks everything is going to succeed with him."

Nuño reddened with anger, and rising to his feet with an effort,—

"I'll take his bet, and for more than he would be willing to stake," he said. "I am sure of my mare."

"But are you sure of your jockey?" asked Berneville. "You know that Chadwal pulled La Bouverie's horse the other day at Caen."

"I am not uneasy: Petersen cannot get as much from any one else for losing as he can get from me for winning."

"But, my dear Nuño," said Andrée de Taillebourg, "what you have promised to Petersen will not give legs to Mandragora."

"The mare is a first-rate animal," retorted the banker.

"Bah, she is not worth a straw."

"I'll lay even odds on her against the field," cried Nuño furiously.

"Nuño you will make yourself ill," said Sophie Viroflay. "There is nothing so dangerous as to fly into a passion before eating."

At this moment the doors leading into the dining-room were thrown open, and the maître

d'hôtel announced breakfast. Clemence took the arm of Faucigny; Jacques, who had re-entered with Patrizzi, offered his to Sophie Viroflay, and the guests proceeded to the dining-room.

This was a magnificent apartment hung with Chinese silk, with furniture of carved wood, which opened into the conservatory on the one side and into the garden on the other. Three large bay-windows of stained glass, representing strange flowers and fantastic birds, looked on a terrace, in the centre of which was an imposing flight of steps leading to a lawn bordered with flowers. Through these windows, open to the breeze, the sunlight streamed in. The turf of the lawn was of an emerald green, and the sanded walks shone dazzling white in the sunshine. The blue sky faded in the distance into a violet hue. The heat and silence tended to produce a feeling of well-being, and the guests of Clemence, yielding unconsciously to the influence of the day, gave themselves up to unrestrained gayety.

In the midst of the general merriment,

Jacques alone remained grave, as if some secret remorse preyed upon his mind. Delivered for the time being from his pecuniary anxieties, his thoughts reverted to those whom he had so cruelly wronged in order to procure this last supply of money. In the midst of this gay company he was possessed by the most lugubrious ideas. He looked at the brilliant table laden with flowers, silver, and crystal; he observed those who were seated around it, and he saw that they were careless and happy. He alone felt the pangs of remorse for an ill-spent life. None of the others were troubled either in mind or heart. He heard their bursts of laughter and their jests; and thus it was with them every day; the same unconcerned gayety, the same round of pleasure.

For him, too, every day was the same, embittered by an anguish which he could not subdue. His eyes were fastened on Clemence and Faucigny, who were talking together in a low voice opposite him. He could not hear their words, but he divined what they were saying. The duke in his soft and insinuating



voice was paying court to the actress, and she was listening to him with a smile. Jacques's brow contracted with a look of pain. "It is because I am growing morose that she is getting tired of me," he said to himself. He emptied one after another the glasses that stood beside his plate, and this mingling of the different wines brought a flush to his cheeks.

Suddenly he heard Patrizzi calling to him across the table.

"Tell me, Jacques," he said, "does not this breakfast remind you of our dinner at Monte Carlo? Some of the men and most of the women here to-day were present on that occasion. We were not as gay as we are now. And the stories that were told! Do you remember?"

"And that reminds me, how is it that the Russian doctor who is traveling with Woreseff is not here?" said Andrée de Taillebourg.

"He has been in Paris for the last five days," said Patrizzi.

At these words Jacques fancied he saw the pale and sorrowful image of Juliette rise

before him. She was seated in the drawing-room where he had spent so many evenings while he was still an obedient son and an affectionate brother. Madame de Vignes was bending anxiously over her daughter, and Davidoff, standing beside them, was looking at them, with pitying eyes. It seemed to the young man that his mother had uttered his name, and that the doctor had answered her by shaking his head sadly. Was it not he who ought to be at the side of those two women? Why should it be left to this stranger to console his mother and his sister? A voice murmured in his ear: "It is because you have refused to fulfill your duty; because you have sacrificed your mother to your passion for gambling, and your sister to your love for a coquette; because you are a coward and an ingrate."

He burst into a sudden fit of laughter, inexplicable and terrible to those who heard him, which drew upon him the attention of all the guests. His face was pale, his lips were tightly drawn, and his eyes were gleaming.

"Yes, yes," he cried without heeding their astonishment. "The dinner at Monte Carlo was not so gay as this breakfast. I was dying then, for one thing, and to-day I am well—oh, very well, thanks to Davidoff, who has propounded an admirable theory respecting the transmigration of souls. You have not forgotten it, Patrizzi? Nor you, Trésorier? He told us a story about a young Russian girl—a curious story indeed! And what an amusing story-teller Davidoff is! No one among us took his story seriously, not even you, Patrizzi, although you are a Neapolitan, and consequently superstitious. For you believe in the evil eye, do you not, Prince."

"Do not jest about those things," responded Patrizzi, who became suddenly grave, and made with the two fingers of his left hand a quick gesture behind his back.

"Ah, ha!" cried Jacques sarcastically; "did you see the gesture of the Prince? He wants to charm away ill-luck. He believes in the *jettatura*;\* yet he did not believe in

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\* The evil eye.

the theories of Davidoff. No one believed in them, no one—except Pierre Laurier. But every one knows the poor fellow was mad!”

The silence of death succeeded these strange words. All the guests felt an icy chill creep over them. One would have thought that the ghost of the man whom they had once known and loved was about to appear before them. The men looked at each other, vexed by this sudden outburst, which cast a gloom over the feast which had begun so joyously. The women began to laugh, without comprehending what was taking place. Clemence, however, furious, bit her livid lips, and striking the table sharply with her knife, her glass fell with a crash on the floor.

“A broken glass!” cried Laure d’Evreux.  
“That is an unlucky omen.”

“All this is truly absurd, Jacques,” cried Clemence in a voice that trembled with anger.  
“Our friends have not come here to listen to such nonsense.”

“He has drunk too much, our good Jacques,”

cried Sophie Viroflay. "It is only half-past twelve, which is a little too early."

"No, I am not intoxicated," cried the young man, whose face assumed a terrible expression. "I said that Laurier was mad. Does any one here doubt it? Among you all, who saw him during the last few months of his life, and who witnessed the anguish he endured, is there one who denies the truth of what I say? Ah! you are silent. Clemence herself does not speak. It is because she knows well that Laurier was mad, and why he was mad."

The countenance of the actress at this speech became yellow with rage, as if gall had replaced the blood in her veins. Her beautiful bosom swelled with rage, and in a hissing voice she cried:

"You make us regret him. It is a pity he is not in your place, and you in his!"

"Patience. I shall soon be there," said Jacques with a terrible smile; "for I, in my turn, am leading the same life of torture which drove him to suicide. I can judge of his sufferings by what I myself endure, and I can

understand how he resolved to bear them no longer. We were speaking just now of Dr. Davidoff, and we recalled the fantastic stories he related to us on a certain night. Patrizzi, do you remember how Laurier, after listening in silence to Davidoff, cried suddenly: 'Jacques, if I should ever grow tired of life I will bequeath my soul to you?' I see you have not forgotten it. Well, before that very night was over he was dead, and I, who had barely a breath of life, recovered my health. A few days later, Prince, meeting me at a masked ball at Nice, you said to me jestingly: 'It seems that you have now an entirely new soul, that of your friend Laurier.' You little knew how true was what you said. This soul was in me. I felt it, strong and ardent, with all its passions, those same passions that had been the ruin of the unfortunate Pierre—an inordinate love of pleasure, a desire to be madly loved, an unconquerable passion for play—that consumed me in their fires. A woman crossed my path; she attracted me irresistibly, fatally. It was impossible for it to be otherwise, for I

had within me the soul of Pierre, filled by the ardent love he had cherished for this woman. Oh, I had a gleam of reason; I foresaw for an instant my fate, and I tried to resist her power, but the spell of the enchantress was upon me and my efforts were vain. All my being impelled me toward her. I obeyed her as a dog obeys his master—she had only to raise her finger and I returned to her after swearing I would never see her again. Thus I have followed step by step the same path that led Pierre Laurier to his ruin. Like him I gambled, because I had need of money—a great deal of money. Like him I forgot everything but the woman I at once hated and adored. He had sacrificed to her his genius and his fame. I betrayed for her those dearest to me. I plundered my mother and neglected my sister. He was base and I have been baser. And now do you think I am in my right mind and that I can reason clearly?”

He rose to his feet; his lips foamed slightly, his hands trembled, and he gave a forced laugh.

He raised his glass filled with champagne and said:

"I drink to all of you, friends and rivals in the affections of the woman I love. And I drink to the memory of the absent one—Pierre Laurier!"

He raised his glass to his lips, but he did not drink. His glance, directed toward the terrace, had become fixed as if in terror. He uttered a hoarse cry and took a step backward. He had caught sight of the man whose name he had just uttered,—Pierre Laurier, mounting the steps with Davidoff. While he was advancing toward them Jacques devoured him with his eyes, breathless, stupefied, a cold sweat upon his forehead.

When the two men paused at the threshold of the room, he made a wild gesture as if to shut them out from his terrified vision, then put his hand to his throat as if suffocating, and cried in a hollow voice:

"Pierre, what do you come to seek here? You know well that we cannot both exist upon the earth together! If you live I must die!"



"Jacques!" cried Laurier, advancing toward him with outstretched hands.

De Vignes tried to push him back, but suddenly turned pale, and uttering a hoarse cry sank into the arms of his friend.

"He is dead!" said Berneville in a trembling voice. "Let some one call for help—"

"Do not stir," said Davidoff: "he is not dead, and we need no help."

He poured some water into a glass, and with it moistened the temples of the unfortunate man, who gave a deep sigh.

Of all those who had gathered around him hastily, Clemence was the first to recover her self-possession.

"What do you want to do?" she asked Davidoff.

"To take M. de Vignes away," returned the Russian.

Pierre took a step toward Clemence, and placing himself in front of her,—

"Do you mean to oppose our doing so?" he asked coldly.

The actress raised her eyes to his face. She

saw that he was calm; his eyes were sad, his lips wore a disdainful smile. He was again the Pierre Laurier of the early days of their acquaintance, with his haughty and thoughtful brow, his manly air, and there was a melancholy sweetness in his voice that stirred the heart of Clemence to its very depths. She wished to treat him with insolence, but a sudden humility softened her heart. She glanced at Pierre with a timid smile, and approaching closer to him said:

"Is it prudent to take him away now? Come with me; I will show you to a room where he can be cared for, and where he will not be disturbed."

"It is useless," responded Pierre. "Neither he nor we will remain here a moment longer."

"Why?" asked Clemence. "Are we then enemies?"

Laurier pointed to Jacques, gasping for breath in the arms of Davidoff, and without anger, but with unalterable firmness, answered:

"I have forgiven you the injury you have

done me. I will never forgive you the injury you have done him. Adieu."

Davidoff and Pierre carried Jacques, still unconscious, across the garden, to the carriage which had brought them.

Hardly were they out of sight than the restraint which had weighed upon the guests disappeared.

"Ah, my children!" cried Burat, "what a termination for a feast!"

"They did well to take him away," said Mariette de Fontenoy; "it was becoming unendurable; I have a horror of scenes at table."

"You have the consolation of knowing, however, Clemence," said Duvernay, "that the men who kill themselves for your sake, always come back to life again."

Clemence remained silent for a moment, her head sunk thoughtfully on her breast. Then looking around at her guests with a sardonic glance,—

"You may say what you choose of Pierre Laurier," she said abruptly, "but among you all there is not one who is his equal!—And

now it is near two o'clock. Let us go to the race-course to see Selim's horse come in a bad last."

\* \* \* \* \*

Pierre and Juliette had been married for three months. The young wife had recovered the bloom of health. Laurier, overwhelmed with orders, worked all day, and he and Juliette spent the evenings with Mme. de Vignes and Jacques. Slowly but surely Jacques was sinking to the tomb. Cured of his dangerous madness he had become amiable and gentle. It seemed as if he was resolved upon making those around him forget the anguish he had caused them to suffer, and not once, since he had been brought to his mother's house, had he been heard to utter a complaint. It seemed as if he accepted suffering and death as an expiation for his faults.

Emaciated and hollow-eyed, his hair almost white, there remained not a trace of the beauty that had turned so many heads. He looked like an old man. He now scarcely ever rose from his easy-chair. A plaid thrown over his

knees, his thin hands stretched out before him, he would sit for hours by the window, sunk in a revery, or gazing idly at the passers-by as they hastened along the street. He refused even to drive with his mother to the Bois to take the air. He would answer with a smile :

"I must have a little vanity, and not show myself looking so weak and miserable to those who remember me young and vigorous. Go you, my dear mother, and when you come back you will tell me about what you have seen; thus I shall enjoy the pleasure of the drive without its fatigue."

Only when his sister came would his melancholy countenance light up with pleasure. He could not bear Juliette out of his sight, and would excuse himself for so selfishly depriving her husband of her society, by saying :

"Let him bear with me. I have only a little while more left in which to enjoy it, and he has a life-time."

One day he said to her :

"Do you remember, Juliette, the terrace at

Beaulieu, and the conversation we had there together?"

The young girl shuddered with horror at this recollection. She wished to interrupt her brother, to prevent him from recalling those sad days. But he insisted with an obstinacy unusual with him.

"The remorse I endure is so bitter," he said, "that at all costs I want to be delivered from it. At night, during my sleepless hours, it tortures me. It envenoms every moment of my life. I have been very guilty toward you who are so sweet and innocent. Ah, so long as you do not forgive me I cannot be at rest!"

"But what have you done, my poor brother, that you should thus accuse yourself?" said Juliette. "Our sorrow was the same, and we mingled our tears together."

"No, our sorrow was not the same," said Jacques in a low voice, "for my sorrow was assumed. I believed that I lived with the life of Pierre, and I did not regret his death. Oh, what I tell you is terrible, but the truth must be said. I had the certainty that you would

die of your grief, yet I felt regret at the conviction only because your death would seem like a reproach to my joy. Yes, I was such a monster that I accepted the thought that Pierre was dead and that you also were going to die. But what were all those deaths to me compared to the certainty of my living? I dared to allow this thought to enter my mind. Man is indeed a cowardly and miserable brute."

His cheeks were burning. He resumed in a gasping voice:

"Between your life and mine, I was satisfied that yours should be the sacrifice. And instead of mourning my lost friend I was rejoiced to live in his stead. I was, as you see, my dear sister, for a time mad. In order to cure me Davidoff tried a dangerous experiment. He wished to prove the power of the moral nature over the physical, of the spirit over the body. He desired to learn if faith could produce material results. The experiment, unfortunately, was tried on a weak nature, an impressionable imagination. It pro-

duced only too powerful a result. Like the miracle workers of old who played upon the credulity of the ignorant, he said to me: 'You are cured; you have received within you another life: live then.' And I was so eager to believe what he told me that I ended by believing it. But at the price of what mental hallucinations, what deterioration of character! I had been amiable and good; I became cruel and selfish. And in order to forget, in order to silence the protestations of my conscience, I threw myself into a life of pleasure, I gave myself up to vice. The transformation that had taken place made me so different from what I had been that I seemed to live with a double life. There was in me the physical being whose acts were inspired by a species of madness, and an intellectual being who protested with groans against all these excesses. For nearly a year I have lived like a criminal, hating my crime and condemning myself for it. Such is the life I have been leading. And it was to prolong this hell that I was willing that Laurier should die, and thought it



right that you should follow him. But a just God interposed. Pierre and you are alive, and it is I who am about to die."

"Jacques!" interrupted the young wife, bending over her brother's hand and letting her tears fall upon it.

The dying man recovered his breath with difficulty, and said with solemnity:

"Tell me that you forgive me, and that when I am no longer among you, you will sometimes think of me with pity and affection."

"Ah, yes! I forgive you," returned Juliette, "since you insist on my saying those unnecessary words, and there is no merit in my doing so, for I love you."

Jacques smiled gently.

"Decidedly," he said, "women are better than we are."

"But, Jacques, you will live," cried Juliette.

"To what purpose?"

Then his expression changed, and with a pathetic attempt at gayety he said:

"Besides, that would not be possible; for now it is you who possess the soul of Pierre."

Six weeks later, as the autumn was drawing to its close, and the last leaves were falling from the trees, they all set out for the south. They saw again with mingled pleasure and sadness the Villa of Beauville, the pine wood, the thuyas and the fir-trees, and the little bay encircled by its red rocks, where the waves died murmuringly away on the beach. Jacques seemed for a time to revive under the influence of the southern sun; then he grew weaker and more sombre than before, and one evening, surrounded by those who loved him, he gently exhaled his latest breath.

He sleeps upon a hillside sheltered by orange-trees, lulled by the fragrant breezes, and on his tomb may be read these words:

JACQUES DE VIGNES.

*God has taken to Himself his poor suffering soul.*

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